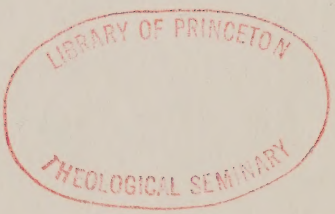

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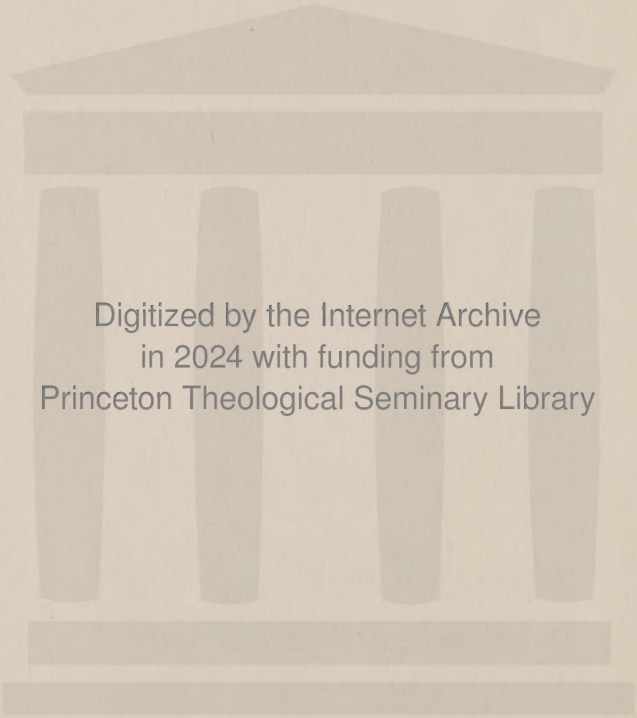
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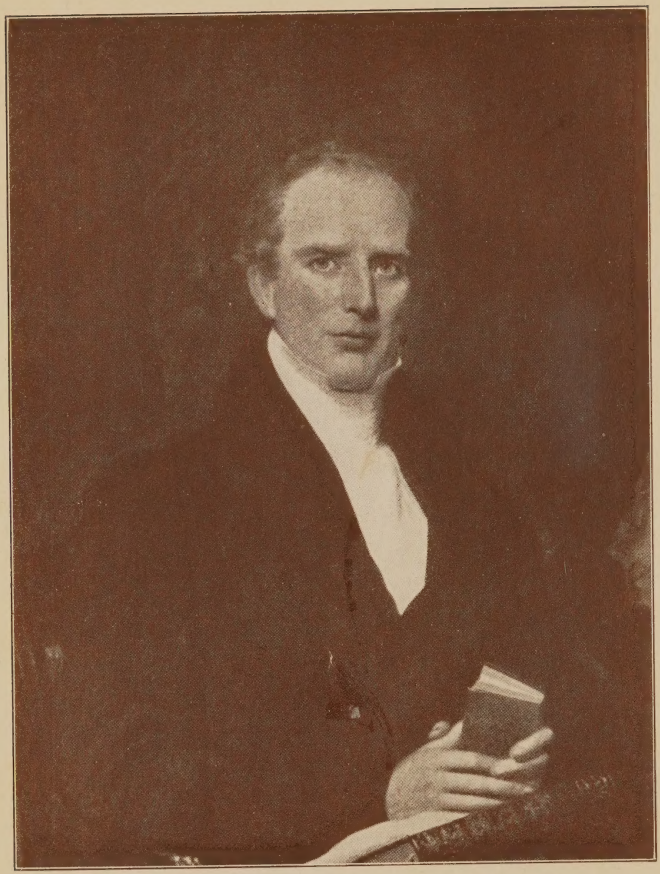

CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY, *aet.* 40
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A Mighty Winner of Souls

CHARLES G. FINNEY

A STUDY IN EVANGELISM

By

FRANK GRENVILLE BEARDSLEY, PH.D., S.T.D.

Author of
History of American Revivals, etc.

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TO MY WIFE

MARY EVANNA BEARDSLEY

PREFATORY

MULTITUDES, today, are looking with eager expectation and ardent hope for a new era in evangelism. Methods are changing. The day of the professional evangelist, at least for the present, is past. The "preaching mission" is taking the place of the old-fashioned revival meetings. That America and the world need a great spiritual awakening goes without saying. A widespread indifference to the claims of religion is all too prevalent, church attendance is sadly neglected, the enrolment in our Sunday Schools has suffered a serious decline, and great numbers, religiously speaking, are without compass or rudder or sail.

Nothing will serve to promote an interest in evangelism more than a study of the lives and measures of the men who were successful in winning souls in the past, not that we may attempt to reproduce their methods, but that we may catch something of their spirit and discover those principles which underlie all true evangelism.

No man in his day and generation was more signally blessed of God in winning souls than Charles G. Finney. Thousands and tens of thousands in this and other lands were brought to Christ through his instrumentality. It is hoped that this brief study of his life and

labors may stimulate others to renewed effort in seeking to bring men to a saving knowledge of Him who is our Redemer and Lord.

FRANK G. BEARDSLEY.

CONTENTS

		PAGE
	PREFATORY	5
CHAPTER		
I.	EARLY LIFE	9
II.	"BEHOLD, HE PRAYETH"	21
III.	GOD'S ADVOCATE	33
IV.	A WINNER OF SOULS	47
V.	OPPOSITION TO NEW MEASURES	67
VI.	EVANGELISTIC LABORS	85
VII.	PASTORATE IN NEW YORK	109
VIII.	A SCHOOL IN THE WILDERNESS	125
IX.	SUBSEQUENT EVANGELISTIC LABORS	145
X.	FINNEY AS AN EVANGELIST	161
XI.	PERSONALIA	177

Chapter I

Early Life

Ever since the Great Awakening, when George Whitefield travelled throughout the colonies from Maine to Georgia stirring the multitudes by the power of his impassioned eloquence, almost every American generation has had its revival preachers. These itinerant evangelists have made it their business to go from place to place arousing lukewarm and indifferent professors of religion and exhorting sinners to repentance. No name bulks larger in the history of American evangelism than that of Charles G. Finney, who, with some intermissions as a pastor and teacher, continued his evangelistic labors for nearly half a century and whose writings still receive a wide acceptance.

Paradoxical as it may seem, Finney was not converted in a religious revival and never attended an evangelistic meeting until he began to conduct such services himself. After a conversion almost as remarkable as that of Saul of Tarsus he abandoned the practice of law and, with no preparation for the ministry aside from some months spent in the study of his pastor, began to preach the Gospel.

At the outset of his ministry he had no thought of

preaching elsewhere than in the backwoods and rural districts. But within a few years his services were in demand in the great cities, Philadelphia, New York, and Boston. At the height of his evangelistic career he organized Broadway Tabernacle, one of the leading Congregational churches in the country, from the pastorate of which he was called to Oberlin College, recently started in the pioneer wilds of Northern Ohio. From his work as a teacher and administrator he was frequently summoned to various cities throughout the country, and twice he spent extended periods in Great Britain. The story of his life reads like a romance, and from it we may gain some insight into the sources of his power as a preacher of righteousness and a winner of souls.

The son of Sylvester Finney, a farmer and a veteran of the Revolutionary War, he was born in Warren, Litchfield County, Connecticut, August 29, 1792. He was named Charles Grandison after a character in one of Richardson's novels. Shortly after the War for Independence the movement of population to the westward had begun. In the venturesome spirit of their pioneer ancestors sturdy New Englanders, former soldiers of the Revolution and others, set out with their families and portable possessions in ox carts and covered wagons for the unoccupied regions to the west of the Hudson River and beyond. When Finney was two years of age his parents, following this tide of emigration, removed to Oneida County, New York, locating temporarily at Brotherton, but taking up their permanent abode in the vicinity of Hanover, now Kirkland, but at that time a part of Paris.

The outdoor life on the farm, the "chores" in which at an early age he was expected to participate, and, as he grew older, the work of tilling the soil and felling timber, developed in the youth Finney a strong and rugged constitution which stood him well in hand amidst the arduous activities of his later life. During the hunting season with his long barreled flintlock rifle he scoured the woods in the pursuit of game. He became an expert shot and until long past middle life enjoyed hunting as a diversion and means of recreation. He joined in the rude sports of the period. Said his grandson, "When he was twenty he excelled every man and boy he met, in every species of toil or sport. No man could throw him; no man could knock his hat off; no man could run faster, jump farther, leap higher or throw a ball with greater force and precision. When his family moved to the shore of Henderson's Bay, near Sackett's Harbor, he added to his accomplishments rowing, swimming, and sailing."

True to their antecedents and traditions the pioneers from New England established schools in the wilderness, the principal aim of which was to teach the pupils to read and spell correctly, to write legibly, and to cipher with sufficient accuracy to keep family accounts correctly and compute interest on a debt. The teachers, who usually boarded " 'round" as a part of their compensation, as a rule had seldom gone beyond the rudimentary branches themselves. Occasionally a theological student, who sought thus to augment his funds to continue his course at Harvard or Yale, was employed for a term or two. The course of instruction was crude. All of the appliances of the modern teacher, maps,

charts, globes, and models, were lacking. Textbooks were few. Webster's blue-backed "Speller" had come into common use; Hodder's and Pike's arithmetics were the only ones available in that branch; while Jedidiah Morse's *Universal Geography,* an 18mo volume with four maps, covered that field.

After completing such studies as could be taken in the rural schools, young Finney attended, for two years, Hamilton Oneida Institute, at Clinton, New York, only a few miles distant from his father's farm in Oneida County. This institute had been projected in 1793 by Samuel Kirkland, famous as a missionary to the Indians, to provide instruction for Indians and whites. Named in honor of Alexander Hamilton, one of its first trustees, the school was incorporated as Hamilton College in 1812. The corner stone for the first building was laid July 1, 1794, by Baron von Steuben of Revolutionary fame, but owing to the lack of funds, the building was not completed for several years, and it was not until 1798 that the Institute was opened for instruction.

During Finney's student days in Hamilton Oneida Institute the principal was Seth Norton who later became professor of languages in Hamilton College. He was a graduate of Yale College and had been a tutor there two years previous to his entrance upon the principalship of the Institute. A fine classical scholar and a lover of music as well, he succeeded in instilling within the mind of Finney an intense love of music, teaching him to sing, to read music at sight, and to play upon the violin and bass viol, or violoncello as it is called today. With the first money which he earned in teaching

Finney purchased a base viol upon which he became a skilled performer.

About 1808 his parents moved to Henderson, on Lake Ontario, in Jefferson County, New York. The next four years he taught at Henderson, two months in the summer and three months in the winter. He was the idol of his pupils, participating with zest in their sports before and after school. Although there were older and larger boys than he in school, he could excel them all in their feats of strength and skill. He commanded the respect of those who were disposed to be unruly and in the schoolroom he maintained perfect discipline. At the first hint of disorder a flash of his eye would quell the disturber at once.

In the summer of 1812, when an invasion from Canada was threatened, Finney went to Sackett's Harbor with the intention of enlisting in the navy. The town was a scene of confusion and disorder. Drunken militiamen jostled one another in the streets, quarreling, cursing, and polluting the very atmosphere with their oaths and ribald jests. Said his grandson: "He heard more profanity and obscenity in that one day, than he had heard in all his life before. To cap the climax, he was accosted by an abandoned woman—a follower of the camp—young, pretty, and saucy. He looked at her in wonder and, when he comprehended the nature of her request, he was so overcome with pity for her degradation and lack of shame that his cheeks burned, and before he could check it he was shedding tears and sobbing violently. She, moved to shame by this extraordinary spectacle, wept too, and without another word they parted. In narrating the

incident fifty-five years later he was visibly affected and remarked: 'Oh, if I had only been a Christian at that time! The young woman might have been saved! Perhaps God brought about this meeting on purpose to open her eyes and she may have repented.' "

The threatened invasion proved a fiasco and, deeply distressed by all that he had seen and heard, Finney returned to his home. Later that same year, having abandoned the idea of enlisting in the navy, he went back to his native town, Warren, Connecticut, where for a period of two years he attended an academy or high school. During this time he supported himself by working on his uncle's farm in summer and conducting a singing school in winter largely attended by the young people from miles around. In the academy he manifested those qualities of leadership for which he was afterwards distinguished, acquiring a reputation for wit and oratory in the literary society and serving as editor of the school journal which, in the form of manuscript, passed from hand to hand. It was his intention to take a full classical course at Yale College, but his teacher, a Yale graduate, persuaded him that this would be a waste of time, since with the habits of study which he had acquired he would be able in two years easily to complete privately the four years' work required for graduation.

Listening to this advice Finney spent the next two years teaching in New Jersey, returning to Warren from time to time to report progress to his teacher and to receive further suggestions as to his studies. Although not a college graduate, he acquired a working knowledge of the ancient languages, Latin, Greek, and

Hebrew, but in his *Autobiography* he speaks modestly of his linguistic attainments, saying, "I never possessed so much knowledge of the ancient languages as to think myself capable of independently criticising our English translation of the Bible."

After an absence of four years he returned to New York State. It was then his purpose to join his former teacher in the establishment of an academy at some point in the South, but owing to the ill health of his mother and the importunities of his father he was persuaded to relinquish the undertaking.

After deliberating at length as to his future he finally decided to prepare himself for the legal profession, and sometime during the year 1818 he went to Adams, Jefferson County, New York, a few miles distant from the home of his parents, to enter the office of Judge Benjamin Wright, the leading attorney in that section of the state. Active in politics and a warm personal friend of Governor De Witt Clinton, Judge Wright was appointed by the latter a Canal Commissioner and at a later time Surrogate of Jefferson County. After reading law in his office for a period of two years Finney was duly admitted to the bar and entered at once into partnership with his preceptor in the law.

As a law student and young attorney Finney entered whole-heartedly into the social and religious life of the community. He took an active part in the work of the Masonic fraternity. At the age of twenty-one, while attending school in Warren, Connecticut, and living at the home of his uncle, the latter suggested that, as he was away from home and among strangers, it would be an advantage to him to become a member of the

Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, since as such he would find friends everywhere. Accepting his advice he applied for membership in the lodge at Warren and after passing through the required preliminaries he was duly raised to the "Sublime degree of Master Mason." On commencing his legal studies he "demitted" to the lodge at Adams and after a time was elected its secretary. By assiduous attention to the ritual and lectures of the different "degrees" he developed into what his Masonic brethren termed a "bright Mason."

Up to this time his religious privileges had been meager. Neither of his parents was religiously inclined and his opportunities for church attendance had been limited. There was no church in the vicinity of his father's farm in Oneida County until about a year before their departure to Jefferson County. The town of Henderson was marked by a similar absence of religious services. Infrequently in the communities where he had lived some illiterate itinerant preacher had held forth, to the no small amusement of the inhabitants, who took a keen delight in criticizing the grammatical errors which they heard and exposing to ridicule the ludicrous misstatements that had been made.

Until he attended school in New England he had never lived in a praying community, and the type of religious life with which he there came into contact did not impress him deeply. The minister of the parish was an aged man, whose sermons for the most part were dry, doctrinal disquisitions which he read in a dull, monotonous fashion so that they did not appeal to the ardent nature of young Finney. In New Jersey where he taught school the preaching was in German,

which to say the least was not edifying to one who did not understand the language. In view of these limited opportunities it was not strange that he should have said of himself: "When I went to Adams to study law, I was almost as ignorant of religion as a heathen. I had been brought up mostly in the woods. I had little regard to the Sabbath, and had no definite knowledge of religious truth."

At Adams, where he was invited to lead the choir, he was brought under the preaching of Rev. George W. Gale, a Princeton graduate, whose theology was strongly tinctured with the hyper-Calvinism of the period. The preaching of this good man was a source of much perplexity to the young attorney. He held that men were sinful by nature, that the will was so enslaved as to be utterly incapable of a right choice, and that conversion was a physical change, to be wrought independently of man's agency through the electing grace of God. If he preached on repentance he would be sure to inform his hearers that they could not repent, or if he spoke on saving faith he would tell them that they could not believe until their natures were changed by the Holy Spirit.

Writing of Mr. Gale's preaching Finney said: "I now think that I criticised his sermons unmercifully. . . . Indeed, I found it impossible to attach any meaning to the terms which he used with great formality and frequency. What did he mean by repentance? Was it a mere feeling of sorrow for sin? Was it altogether a passive state of mind, or did it involve a voluntary element? If it was a change of mind, in what sense was it a change of mind? What did he mean by the term

'regeneration'? What did such language mean when applied to a spiritual change? What did he mean by faith? Was it merely an intellectual state? Was it merely a conviction or persuasion that the things stated in the gospel were true? What did he mean by sanctification? Did it involve any physical change in the subject, or any physical influence on the part of God? I could not tell; neither did he seem to know himself. I sometimes told him that he seemed to begin in the middle of his discourse, and to assume many things which, to my mind, needed to be proved. I must say, I was rather perplexed than edified by his preaching."

To Finney there was an element of unreality in the pastor's preaching. He was not at all convinced that, even in the minister's own thinking, the doctrines which entered into his theological system had any real relation to life. One Sunday evening after service he took Mr. Gale to task for some statement which he had made, saying, "You do not believe what you preach; were I in your place, holding to the teachings which you declare, I would ring the church bell and cry in the streets 'Fire! Fire!'" Even though he made no pretensions to the way of faith Finney felt that the gripping power of religion ought to possess one's very being and stir him to the innermost depths of his nature.

Occasionally Mr. Gale would drop into the young attorney's office to engage him in religious conversation, but such were the objections which the latter raised and the questions which he propounded that the minister concluded that he must be thoroughly hardened, and when some of his parishioners proposed making Finney a subject of prayer he discouraged the idea

because in his judgment it would be useless, and he went so far as to express the opinion that such was the young attorney's influence over the young people of the community that there could be no hope for their conversion so long as he remained in Adams. Notwithstanding the pastor's pessimistic attitude a little company of young people in his congregation, among them the young woman who subsequently became Finney's wife, banded themselves together to intercede with God for his salvation.

Finney not only opposed the theological views of his pastor, but he was unsparing in his criticism of the members of the church for their inconsistencies and particularly for their want of faith. He was in the habit of attending prayer meeting whenever his duties would permit, and one evening when someone asked him if he did not wish to be prayed for, he arose with the caustic reply: "I suppose I need to be prayed for; I am conscious that I am a sinner; but I do not see that it will do any good for you to pray for me; you are continually asking, but you do not receive. You have been praying for the Holy Spirit to descend upon yourselves, and yet complaining of your leanness. You have prayed enough since I have attended these meetings to have prayed the devil out of Adams, if there is any virtue in your prayers. But here you are praying on and complaining still."

While it is doubtless true, as Finney intimates, that the unanswered prayers of Christian people were a great stumblingblock to him, nevertheless from the sharpness of his reply it is evident that the prayers of the young people were having their effect and that he was

in the throes of that spiritual conflict which was to culminate in his conversion.

In the meanwhile he had purchased his first copy of the Bible. In the legal works which he had studied, the Mosaic Institutes were frequently referred to as an authority for many of the principles of common law. His curiosity having become aroused he purchased a copy of the sacred Scriptures. A candid examination of its contents convinced him that it was precisely what it claimed to be—the Word of God.

His study of the Scriptures, his attendance at the services of worship, together with a consideration of the problems thus arising were not without their effect and, to use his own expression, he "became very restless." The young disciple of Blackstone was not far from the Kingdom of God. He realized that he was not fit for heaven should he die, while the question whether he should accept salvation or continue the pursuit of a worldly life kept coming before his mind with great urgency and pungent force. He was approaching the crisis of his life, and soon it was to be said of him as of old it had been said of Saul of Tarsus, "behold, he prayeth."

Chapter II

"Behold, He Prayeth"

On the evening of Sunday, October 7, 1821, after the services of worship were over, Finney reached the momentous decision that he would at once settle the question of his soul's salvation and if possible make his peace with God. On the following two days when not occupied with the duties of his profession he spent much time in prayer and a perusal of the Scriptures. These pursuits served but to deepen his convictions, and to conceal his emotions he resorted to the common subterfuge of avoiding his pastor and all religious people as much as possible. He stopped the keyhole of his door when he prayed, and was careful to keep his Bible out of sight whenever visitors appeared in the office.

Up to this time he had kept his copy of the Bible on a table with his law books and no thought of shame had occurred in connection with reading the sacred volume. Such, however, is the perversity of the human heart that, when the soul reaches its spiritual crisis, concealment is sought for those very emotions which under divine grace are calculated to issue in salvation.

By Tuesday night his agitation of mind had in-

creased until he had been brought to a condition well-nigh verging on despair. He was distressed with a presentiment that he was about to die, and he was sure that he would be lost if he did. The following morning as he was going to his office an inward voice seemed to admonish him: "What are you waiting for? Did you not promise to give your heart to God? And what are you trying to do? Are you endeavoring to work out a righteousness of your own?"

As he revolved these problems in his mind the truth was impressed upon him that salvation was a gift, not to be wrought out by works, but to be appropriated by faith in Jesus Christ. The whole plan of salvation seemed to be revealed to him with great clearness as a finished work of grace through the atoning merits of the Son of God; instead of needing any righteousness of his own to commend him to God he needed but to submit himself to the righteousness of God that was in Christ Jesus. After pondering the matter for some moments this question came to his mind, "Will you accept it now, today?" He replied: "Yes, I will accept it today, or I will die in the attempt."

As a place suited to his purpose he sought the seclusion of a piece of woods where he had been in the habit of taking daily walks in pleasant weather. To escape observation he skulked along under a fence, and on reaching the cover of the forest he kneeled down beside a log and attempted to pray, but to his dismay he found he could not. His lips seemed to be sealed and his heart refused to pray. In an agony of spirit he communed with himself: "I cannot pray. My heart is dead to God and will not pray."

In view of Finney's subsequent insistence upon immediate submission to God as an essential condition to salvation, and his exhortation to sinners "to make themselves new hearts," the question might be raised as to the cause of the difficulty which he now experienced in making his peace with God. To this the reply might be given that, while he had revolted from the old idea of a physical and involuntary regeneration and the fact had just been impressed upon him that salvation was not of works but of faith, still the various steps in the process of salvation had not been clearly unfolded to him. Consequently he was as a blind man groping in the darkness with no one to direct him to the pathway of light.

His submission moreover was not complete. After several unsuccessful attempts to pray, once or twice he fancied that he heard a rustling in the leaves, and opening his eyes to see if anyone was present he was appalled at the thought of his own wickedness and pride of heart in being ashamed to have anyone see him in the attitude of prayer. "What!" he exclaimed, "such a degraded sinner as I am, on my knees, confessing my sins to a great and holy God, and ashamed to have any human being, and a sinner like myself, find me on my knees, endeavoring to make my peace with an offended God!" In deep agony of spirit he cried aloud to God for mercy.

At this juncture a passage of Scripture came into his mind as clearly as if he had just read it: "And ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart." He did not remem-

ber ever having read this passage before, but he seized upon it with avidity and exclaimed: "Lord, I take thee at thy word. Thou knowest that I do search for thee with all my heart." Other passages occurred to him, and he continued thus to pray and accept promises until with a light heart he found himself tripping through the bushes toward the road and saying, "If ever I am converted I will preach the gospel."

On reaching the road that led to the village he found that his mind had suddenly become quiet and peaceful. He could not understand it. His sense of guilt was gone and he was unable to revive his conviction of sin. He thought that he must have quenched the Holy Spirit; and remembering the boldness of language which he had used in accepting the promises of God he suspected that he had committed the unpardonable sin. But try as he would he could not make himself anxious about it.

When he arrived in the village he found that the whole forenoon had passed, but having no appetite for dinner he went to his office and taking down his bass viol he began to play and sing some sacred songs. His heart was so melted at the words and the tears began to flow so freely that he was obliged to desist. The afternoon was occupied by Judge Wright and himself in transferring their books and furniture to another office. By evening everything had been set in order and his partner, having bidden him good night, departed for home.

As soon as Finney closed the door a deep feeling came upon him. He said: "The rising of my soul was so great that I rushed to the back room of the law office

to pray, when it seemed to me as if I met the Lord Jesus face to face. It did not occur to me then, nor for some time afterward, that this was a wholly mental state. On the contrary it seemed to me that I saw him as I would see any other man. I wept aloud like a child. It seemed to me that I bathed his feet with my tears. I literally bellowed out the unutterable gushings of my heart." Soon after there came upon him a "mighty baptism of the Holy Ghost" and wave after wave of divine influence seemed to sweep over him. At last he cried out, "I shall die if these waves continue to pass over me, Lord I cannot bear any more."

Late that evening a member of the choir came into the office and on finding Finney in tears inquired, "Mr. Finney, what ails you? Are you in pain?" "No, but so happy that I cannot live." The visitor hurried out and brought in an elder of the church, to whom Finney began to narrate his experience. While he was thus engaged a young man of the neighborhood who was preparing for college stepped into the office and on listening to Finney's story was so impressed that he exclaimed, "Do pray for me!" Not long afterwards the young man was converted.

The following morning, although he had not yet received the assurance of sins forgiven, a similar baptism came upon him. In this enraptured state he was taught the doctrine of justification by faith. He realized that through faith in Jesus Christ forgiveness was a present experience. The consciousness of sin and the guilt of sin were gone, and he experienced no more sense of condemnation for his past sins than if he had never sinned.

Such in brief is the story of the remarkable conversion of this remarkable man. His conversion was as profound as that of an Augustine or a Luther, and as strongly marked as that of the Apostle Paul. Those who knew him in after years have said that he was not the sort of man in whom they would have expected such experiences. He was too rugged and the type of his mind seemed too masculine for him to be moved in any such way. That the change thus wrought was the work of God is evidenced by his whole subsequent life.

The practice of law immediately lost all of its attractions. That very morning a deacon of the church, who had employed him as his attorney in a suit at law, called at the office to remind him that the trial was to take place at ten o'clock. Finney replied: "I have enlisted in the service of Christ and have a retainer to plead his cause. You must therefore seek another attorney to attend the suit." With bowed head the deacon left the office and straightway settled the case. He then gave himself to prayer and soon entered into a deeper religious experience.

The news of Finney's conversion created intense excitement throughout the town of Adams and was received with incredulity. Some time before, a man had said to his wife who was a praying woman: "If religion is true, why don't you Christians convert Finney? If you can convert him, I will believe that there is something in religion." So hopeless, if not impossible, seemed the task. An old lawyer when he heard the rumor said: "There is nothing in it. It is just a practical joke. Finney is making sport of the Christian people in the place

and is trying to see what he can make them believe." Even Mr. Gale, the minister, refused to believe the report and declared it to be untrue.

That evening, although no appointment had been made for a service, the people of the village by common consent flocked to the church which was filled to overflowing. Mr. Gale was present but no one seemed disposed to open the meeting, whereupon Finney arose and went forward. Although used to addressing courts, juries, and public gatherings, at first as his great expressive eyes swept over the audience he was panic-stricken and involuntarily exclaimed to himself, "My God, is it I?" But mustering courage and gaining confidence as he proceeded, he gave a graphic account of what had happened, telling of the purpose which he had formed to become a Christian, of the mighty struggle which had surged within him as he knelt by the side of the log in the woods, of the great pride of his heart which seemed to be a tremendous stumbling-block in the way of his submission to God, and finally of his knowledge of sins forgiven together with the joy and peace which he had received in believing.

As he unfolded the story of his remarkable conversion his fellow townsmen were profoundly moved. The man who had asked his wife why they didn't convert Finney was present, but so agitated did he become that in the midst of the service he went home without taking his hat. The old lawyer who had declared that the story of his conversion was a hoax was also on hand, and he too left before the meeting was over affirming that Finney was insane. He said, "He is in earnest, there is no mistake; but he is deranged, that is clear." Mr.

Gale arose at the close of Finney's remarks and made apology for refusing to believe the report of his conversion and for discouraging the people in their purpose to make him a subject of prayer.

Following this meeting Finney summoned the members of his choir together, and, acknowledging that he had been a stumblingblock in the way of their salvation, urged them to accept Christ at once. Within a short time everyone of them was converted and united with the church. Among their number was a daughter of Judge Wright who became the mother of Bishop Henry B. Whipple of Minnesota. A revival followed which resulted in numerous conversions and extended throughout the entire county. Daily meetings were sustained for several weeks, and a number of the leading men in the community were influenced to turn to God.

It frequently happens that when a person passes through a profound religious experience a tendency develops on the part of others to attempt to reproduce it. The idea also develops that such an experience is necessary. This proved the case in Adams at that time, and it is interesting to note that many were converted in the woods and on the very spot where Finney had made his submission to God.

Among those who were thus affected was Judge Wright, Finney's law partner. On the morning after his conversion, when the Judge came into the office, Finney said a few words to him on the subject of salvation. These words pierced him like an arrow and without making any reply he dropped his head. A few minutes later he left the office. In the days that followed several persons were converted in the woods, and when

Judge Wright heard them narrate their experience he resolved that he never should go to the woods to pray. To him it seemed an unnecessary procedure. He said, "I have a parlor to pray in, I am not going to the woods." Weeks passed by and his convictions deepened. He tried to persuade himself that it was not pride that kept him from Christ, and so when he would be going home from meeting he would kneel in the street and pray. He would even look about for a mud puddle in which to pray, to show that he had no pride in the matter, but still no peace came. Realizing at last that pride was, nevertheless, the great obstacle in the way of his salvation he decided to yield. On going to the woods and kneeling down to pray he was filled with such a sense of peace and joy that he was well-nigh overcome.

Ten years after Finney's conversion he had become a noted evangelist and the log in the woods by the side of which he had kneeled down to pray likewise had become noted and was pointed out to strangers visiting the town of Adams. About that time Jedidiah Burchard conducted a series of meetings in the community. A young man who had been brought under the influence of these meetings decided that he must go to the woods and be converted in precisely the same way as Mr. Finney. He kneeled down beside the log for a long time, but no peace of mind came to him and in amazement he said to himself: "I know that this is the log where Mr. Finney kneeled, and I am sure that I have humbled myself as low as he did. What is the matter?" Greatly troubled he started on his homeward way thinking that perhaps he was not among the elect or else had sinned away his day of grace. As he pondered the matter he

finally asked himself, "What is religion?" Then the thought occurred to him: "It is serving God; it is obedience. Why not commence now, right here?" He said "I will," and so on his homeward way he realized that religion is not a great experience, but obedience to God, no less truly than had Mr. Finney in the woods ten years before.

No man's conversion was more thorough and radical than that of Charles G. Finney. He interpreted very literally the words of Jesus, "whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple." He soon came to the conclusion that it was his duty to withdraw from the Masonic fraternity. In the membership of the lodge at Adams there were a number of men as thoroughly irreligious as any he had ever known, men who were very intemperate and very profane, the kind of men with whom he never would have thought of associating had they not been Freemasons. After his conversion Finney attended a meeting of the lodge and although called upon to offer prayer he was depressed and felt strangely out of place. Instinctively he recoiled from further fellowship with men whom he knew to be out of sympathy with religion. Finally without consulting anyone he requested his discharge from the lodge and thereafter refused to be recognized as a Freemason.

Not long after his conversion Finney visited his aged parents at Henderson. His father met him at the gate, saying, "How do you do, Charles?" to which he replied: "I am very well, father, body and soul. But father, you are an old man; all of your children have grown up and have left your house; and I never heard a prayer in

my father's house." His father dropped his head and burst into tears saying: "I know it, Charles. Come in and pray yourself." He did so with the result that his father and mother were deeply moved and soon after both were converted. He remained in town two or three days conversing with everybody whom he met upon the great theme of salvation. Within a week a meeting was started in the town which was followed by far reaching results for good. "From this meeting," said Finney, "the work of the Lord spread forth in every direction all over the town. And thus it spread at that time from Adams as a centre, throughout nearly all the towns in the county."

Chapter III

God's Advocate

"About as much mystery," says Professor G. Frederick Wright, "hangs over the first year and a half of Finney's life subsequent to his conversion as that which shrouds the corresponding period of the Apostle Paul's renewed life." So far as we are able to learn, for several months he seems to have been occupied chiefly in furthering, by personal efforts and otherwise, the interests of the religious revival which had swept over the town of Adams and the surrounding country as a result of his conversion.

The purpose which he had expressed on his homeward way from the woods, to preach the Gospel if he were converted, remained uppermost in his mind. He had been very fond of his profession, but after his conversion he found no pleasure in attending to legal business. Many pressing invitations came to him to conduct lawsuits, but he uniformly refused. He said: "I did not dare to trust myself in the excitement of a contested lawsuit; and furthermore, the business itself of conducting other people's controversies appeared odious and offensive to me."

Possessed of gifts, as he undoubtedly was, which

would have given him a place at the very forefront of the legal profession, together with the prospects for political preferment which would naturally have come his way as a rising young attorney, it was no small sacrifice for Finney to turn aside from the law. His magnetic and commanding personality, his brilliant mind, his incisive logic, his eloquence and persuasive power as a speaker, all would have combined to make him an outstanding figure in the forum and at the bar.

His friends viewed his decision with dismay. Horatio N. Davis, who had been one of his pupils at Henderson, said: "When he abandoned the profession and decided to study for the ministry we all felt that he had made an awful mistake. That if he had continued in the practice he was destined, in a very short time, to attain to the highest position at the bar and in politics."

From the standpoint of purely worldly advantage the ministry at that time had little or nothing to offer. But Finney had made up his mind that, at whatever cost, he would devote his life to the preaching of the Gospel. Accordingly on June 25, 1823, at a meeting held at Adams, he was taken under the care of the St. Lawrence Presbytery "with a view to the gospel ministry." Writing of this epoch in his life he says:

"Some of the ministers urged me to go to Princeton to study theology; but I declined. When they asked me why I would not go to Princeton, I told them that my pecuniary circumstances forbade it. This was true; but they said they would see that my expenses were paid. Still I refused to go; and, when urged to give my reasons, I plainly told them that I would not put myself under such an influence as they had been under; that

I was confident they had been wrongly educated, and they were not ministers that met my ideal of what a minister of Christ should be. I told them this reluctantly, but I could not withhold it."

His remarks seem to have occasioned no offence, and according to the records of the Presbytery he was "directed to pursue his studies under the direction of Rev. Messrs. Gale and Boardman." The former was his pastor and the latter, the Rev. George Smith Boardman, also a graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, was for many years pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Watertown, New York. Finney's studies, however, seem to have been under the direction of his pastor chiefly. He boarded for a time in the home of Mr. Gale who gave him every encouragement, kindly offered him the use of his library, and expressed a willingness to assist him in every way that he could.

Modern methods in theological education were then just in their beginnings. The Congregationalists had founded their first theological seminary at Andover, Massachusetts, in 1808, and the Presbyterians their seminary at Princeton in 1812. Prior to that time the usual practice for young men who were preparing for the ministry, was to "read" theology under the guidance of some experienced pastor. From 1773 to 1827, during his pastorate at Franklin, Massachusetts, a hundred young men were prepared for the ministry under the celebrated Dr. Nathaniel Emmons. This method of theological instruction continued well into the nineteenth century, and in some instances almost down to the present day.

It was after this fashion that Finney was to receive

his theological training. The only data which we have covering this period in his life are his *Memoirs*. From all that can be gathered his doctrinal education seems to have consisted chiefly in controversial discussions with his instructor. But he could not be persuaded to accept the hyper-Calvinistic viewpoint of the latter, who held that men were sinners by birth, with a constitution morally depraved and a will so enslaved as to be utterly unable to comply with the terms of the Gospel—to repent, believe or do anything that God required of them. They were free to commit sin, but were not free to do right. For this sinful nature, received from Adam by natural generation, as well as their own transgressions, all mankind was doomed to eternal damnation. Christ died only for the elect, exact justice having been satisfied by His sufferings on the cross, whereby their debt was paid and the penalty required by the divine law was discharged in full. Regeneration was a physical change wrought by the Holy Spirit acting directly upon the substance of the soul. In this process the sinner was passive. Nothing he could do, nothing anyone else could do for him, would avail for his salvation. In due time, if he was of the elect, God would convert him, but if he was of the nonelect he would remain without hope and without God in the world.

The idea of a necessitated will was particularly repugnant to the logical and analytical mind of the young attorney. He was convinced that ability was commensurate with responsibility, that men were not sinners by birth but from choice, that they were endowed by nature with all the powers of moral agency and what

was required of them was not to alter these powers but to use them in the service of their Maker. Regeneration was not a physical change, a change in the substance of the soul, but a change in the general preference of the mind, effected by the moral influence of the Holy Spirit in persuading men through motives to embrace the truths of the Gospel. It was the duty, therefore, of men to repent, believe, and obey the Gospel.

The views of the two men were diametrically opposite and when Finney, unconvinced by the arguments of his pastor, refused to accept his theological viewpoint Mr. Gale said repeatedly: "Mr. Finney, if you continue to argue and reason, you will land in infidelity, just as some of the students at Princeton have done who reasoned upon the subject and refused to accept the Confession of Faith. You must not be so opinionated, but accept the teachings of the great doctors of the church."

As an attorney and a student of the law Finney had been trained to exact thinking. That one should suffer his reason to abdicate and accept a ready-made theology was to him unthinkable. In the preface to his *Lectures on Systematic Theology,* published some twenty years later, he said:

"My brother, sister, friend—reason, study, think. . . . You were made to think. It will do you good to think; to develope your powers of study. God designed that religion should require thought; intense thought and should thoroughly develope our powers of thought. The Bible itself is written in a style so condensed as to require much *intense study.* Many know nothing of the Bible or of religion because they will not think and study."

What Finney afterwards commended to others, he

scrupulously practiced as a student of theology. Believing that the truth was supreme and that it must justify itself in the light of human reason, he would accept nothing on Mr. Gale's say-so or on the authority of the theologians of the day.

Finally Mr. Gale said to him: "You ought to defer to the opinions of the great and good men, who by much study and deliberation have come to such conclusions. It is unbecoming in one so young and inexperienced as yourself, bred in the profession of the law and having no theological education, to oppose the views of trained and learned theologians. The decisions of the church ought to be respected and you should surrender your own judgment to the superior wisdom of others."

Finney felt that there was considerable force to this argument; yet he could not suffer his reason to abdicate, or surrender his own judgment to merely human opinion. He said: "I found myself utterly unable to accept doctrines on the ground of authority. If I tried to accept those doctrines as mere dogmas, I could not do it. I could not be honest in doing it; I could not respect myself in doing it. Often when I left Mr. Gale I would go to my room and spend a long time on my knees over my Bible. Indeed I read my Bible on my knees a great deal during those days of conflict, beseeching the Lord to teach me his own mind on those points. I had no where to go but directly to the Bible and to the philosophy or workings of my own mind, as revealed in consciousness."

Independently working out his theological doctrines, as he did upon bended knees and with the Holy Bible

open before him, he nevertheless found it a sore trial to disagree with his pastor and instructor. Often he was greatly depressed and discouraged. There were times when he felt almost persuaded to relinquish studying for the ministry altogether. But he received encouragement and comfort from an elder of the church to whom he freely opened his mind. This man had been trained in the old views, but after protracted conversations with Finney he became satisfied that the views of the latter were correct. Frequently he would visit him to pray with him and encourage him in his studies, until Finney became more firmly decided than ever that, come what might, he would preach the Gospel.

Another incident served to confirm him in his views. A Universalist minister about this time began to promulgate his tenets in the community. He inveighed against the doctrine of endless punishment and affirmed that a God of love could not punish men forever and forever. After hearing one of his discourses Finney arose and said: "This Universalist preacher holds forth doctrines that are new to me, and I do not believe that they are taught in the Bible. But I am going to examine the subject, and if I cannot show that they are false I will become a Universalist myself."

To his friends this seemed like a startling if not a rash and presumptuous statement to make, but it was characteristic of Finney's frankness, and of his confidence that the truths of religion would stand the test of reason and that all of God's ways could be justified to men. After thoroughly preparing himself by an intensive study of the Scriptures upon the subject, during the following week he delivered two lectures in which

he answered the arguments of the Universalist to the general satisfaction of the people.

Seeing that he could accomplish nothing further along that line, the Universalist now undertook to propagate his views of universal salvation on the ground that the provisions of the atonement of Christ were ample for the whole race, and since the debt of all mankind had been paid the electing love of God must include all men and thus secure their salvation.

Mr. Gale was ill at the time and so he asked his pupil to answer these arguments. This Finney did by admitting that the provisions of the atonement were ample for the whole race; but he dissented from the view that Christ had literally paid the debt of sinners. On the contrary he affirmed that Christ had died to remove an insurmountable difficulty in the way of God's forgiving sinners, so as to make it possible for Him to proclaim a universal amnesty; the interests of "public justice" demanded some substitute for the penalties of a broken law; and since Christ had honored the law in His obedience and death, it was safe for God to pardon any and all men who would repent of their sins and believe in Him. Christ's death did not cancel sin in the sense of a literal payment of debt, but was a condition to the forgiveness of sin, since it satisfied the demands of "public justice." The Universalist was vanquished by these arguments much to the surprise of Mr. Gale, who was greatly nonplused at the result, but unconvinced as yet of the correctness of his pupil's views.

Finney not only worked out his own system of theology, based as it was upon his prayerful and inde-

pendent study of the Scriptures interpreted in the light of the vivid religious experience through which he had passed, but he had his own notions as to how the Gospel should be preached. Written sermons at that time were the order of the day. But Finney preached as he would address a jury. "What would be thought of a lawyer," he asked, "who should stand up before a jury and read an essay to them? He would lose his case!"

As an attorney sought to win a verdict for his client, so he aimed at bringing men to a decision for Jesus Christ. He was God's advocate pleading with the souls of men to turn from the error of their ways and accept the proffered gift of salvation. He sought to convert men by the truth and like Paul of old he "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come." His preaching was in a high degree logical and analytical. In fact the criticism was made that there was a tendency to excess in this particular, his sermons sometimes having as high as forty to fifty divisions, or "heads." These divisions often consisted of a single sentence, but so clear was the thought and so logical the application that the most simple statement went like a winged arrow to its mark.

He sought to express his thoughts in the simplest language in order that everyone might understand his message, and his illustrations were drawn from the ordinary vocations in life. He said: "When I came to preach the gospel, my mind was so anxious to be thoroughly understood, that I studied in the most earnest manner, on the one hand to avoid what was vulgar, and on the other to express my thought with the greatest simplicity of language."

His manner of delivery was colloquial and repetitious, often arguing truths that seemed to need no further argument, and repeating statements that apparently had been taken for granted. He said: "I talked to the people as I would have talked to a jury. Of all the causes that were ever plead, the cause of religion, I thought, had the fewest able advocates, and that if advocates at the bar should pursue the same course in pleading the cause of their clients that ministers do in pleading the cause of Christ with sinners, they would not gain a single case."

He was often criticized for his lawyerlike method of presenting the truth and for letting down the dignity of the pulpit. But to his hearers it seemed as if he were conversing with them personally about matters of great mutual concern. Those who heard him often said: "Why it didn't seem like preaching. It seemed as if Mr. Finney had taken me alone, and was conversing with me face to face."

Mr. Finney's manner of preparation for the pulpit was unique. During the earlier years of his ministry, amidst the stress and strain of his work, when he had but little time for thought or study and the only preparation which he could get was upon his knees, often he would enter the pulpit without knowing from what text he should preach and depending solely upon the Holy Spirit to suggest to him the subject of his discourse as well as the manner in which it should be treated. These sermons which he delivered with such power he never regarded as the products of his own brain. He said: "If I did not preach from inspiration, I don't know how I did preach."

It must not be supposed that he advocated preaching without preparation. He said: "My habit has always been to study the gospel, and the best application of it, *all the time*. I do not confine myself to hours and days of writing my sermons; but my mind is always pondering the truths of the gospel, and the best ways of using them. I go among the people and learn their wants. Then, in the light of the Holy Spirit, I take a subject that I think will meet their present necessities. I think intensely on it, and pray much over the subject, and then go and pour it out to the people. I think I have studied all the more for not having written my sermons. I have been obliged to make the subjects upon which I have preached familiar to my thoughts, to fill my mind with them, and then go and talk them off to the people. . . . I simply jot down the order of my propositions, and the positions which I propose to take; and in a word sketch an outline of the remarks and inferences with which I conclude."

Charles G. Finney was not the sort of man who could be put in an ecclesiastical strait-jacket. He insisted on working out his own system of religious doctrine and his own method of proclaiming the Gospel. The months which he spent in the study of his pastor were not without their value. His discussions with Mr. Gale, no doubt, served to clarify his own views and at the same time enabled him to perceive the strength and weaknesses of the views which he opposed.

Finally, after such an unusual course of ministerial preparation, Finney was licensed to preach by the Presbytery on December 30, 1823. He preached two trial sermons from texts which had been given him by the

Presbytery and went through the customary forms of examination. He expected some opposition on account of his doctrinal views, but to his surprise the vote for licensure was unanimous. This was due doubtless to no love for the doctrines of the candidate, but, as Professor Wright surmises, to "general considerations of policy, and from fear of being found fighting against God."

During his examination he was asked if he accepted the Westminster Confession of Faith. He says: "I had not examined it, that is, the large work concerning the catechism and confession. This had made no part of my study. I replied that I received it for substance of doctrine so far as I understood it. But I spoke in a way that plainly implied, I think, that I did not know much about it. When I came to read the Confession of Faith and ponder it, I saw that although I could receive it as I know multitudes do, as containing the substance of Christian doctrine, yet there were several points upon which I could not put the same construction that was put upon them at Princeton; and I, accordingly, everywhere gave the people to understand that I did not accept that construction; or if that was the true construction; then I entirely differed from the Confession of Faith."

The Sunday following his licensure he preached for Mr. Gale who told him as they left the pulpit that he should be very much ashamed to have it known wherever he went that he had studied theology under him. This distressed Finney somewhat at the time, but in after years he had the satisfaction of knowing that his

former pastor and theological instructor had embraced views of truth quite similar to his own.

Mr. Gale subsequently became a leader among the New School Presbyterians, that branch of the Presbyterian Church which modified or toned down some of the more objectionable features of the Westminster Confession. For a time he was compelled by ill health to give up the work of the ministry, but two or three years later he opened the way for Finney to go to Western and conduct the remarkable revivals with which that community and the surrounding section were visited. He finally went to the state of Illinois, where his name has been perpetuated in the city of Galesburg, the seat of Knox College, which he helped to found.

Chapter IV

Winning Souls for Christ

About three months after his licensure to preach Finney was commissioned by the Female Missionary Society of the Western District of New York to labor for three months, as a home missionary, in the northern parts of Jefferson County, New York. He commenced his labors at Evans Mills where he preached in a large stone school house which was used on alternate Sabbaths by the Baptists and Congregationalists. He accordingly divided his time between the congregation at Evans Mills and the Congregational Church at Antwerp, a town some thirteen miles distant.

The church organization at Evans Mills was feeble and its membership small, but the preaching of Finney soon attracted the attention of the people, who flocked to the services in large numbers, but to his disappointment no conversions resulted from his labors. Finally at the close of one of his Sabbath services he announced his dissatisfaction by informing his congregation that he should remain there no longer unless they would accept the Gospel. After explaining his position somewhat he asked all who would accept the Saviour to arise while the remainder should keep their seats. As

he expected, no one arose, and looking over the congregation for a short time he said: "Then you are committed. You have rejected Christ and His Gospel; and ye are witnesses one against the other, and God is a witness against you all. This is explicit, and you may remember as long as you live, that you have committed yourselves against the Saviour, and said, 'We will not have this man Christ Jesus, to reign over us.' "

His audience was indignant at this application and rose *en masse* to leave the building. He paused abruptly in his remarks and they halted to see why he did not go on; whereupon he informed them that he was sorry for them, and would make one more appointment to preach to them the following night. All then retired except a Baptist deacon who came up to him and said: "Brother Finney, you have got them. They cannot rest under this, rely upon it. The brethren are all discouraged, but I am not. I believe you have done the very thing that needed to be done, and that we shall see results." It was arranged that they two should spend the following day in fasting and prayer—"separately in the morning and together in the afternoon." The people were highly indignant at the unfair advantage which they believed Finney had taken of them, and threats of violence against his person were heard during the day.

In the afternoon, according to agreement, Finney and the deacon prayed together. As they did so they were inspired with the assurance of victory. That night the house was packed, and Finney preached a powerful Gospel sermon of which he said: "The Spirit of God came upon me with such power, that it was like

opening a battery upon them. For more than an hour the word of God came through me to them in a manner that I could see was carrying all before it. It was a fire and hammer breaking the rock; and as the sword that was piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit. I saw that a general conviction was spreading over the whole congregation. Many of them could not hold up their heads." He asked for no reversal of their former action, seeming to take it for granted that the people were committed against Christ. Such was the spirit of conviction produced by this sermon that Finney was sought after several times during the night, but as he was absent from his customary lodgings the feelings of all who sought him were greatly intensified.

The next day was spent in visiting from house to house and conversing with the people about their spiritual needs. A powerful revival followed, which was characterized to some extent by emotional outbursts similar to those witnessed under the preaching of Jonathan Edwards. A woman fell down speechless at the close of a service and was carried from the house in a sort of trance in which she remained sixteen hours, emerging at last with a song of deliverance upon her lips. On another occasion a man, who had taken an oath to kill Finney and had armed himself with a loaded pistol to accomplish his purpose, fell from his seat, crying out, "I am sinking into hell." After a sleepless night he too experienced joy and peace in believing. Men of the strongest nerves were so affected that they had to be carried home by their friends.

Finney made no attempt to repress these manifestations, as he would have done at a later period in his

career. Notwithstanding these peculiarities the work went on until nearly the entire community was gathered into the fold of Christ. The tavern keeper of the village, who had been an infidel and a disorderly character, was converted and his house was transformed into a house of prayer. The revival extended to surrounding neighborhoods and produced a lasting effect for good.

A few weeks later the Presbytery of St. Lawrence met at Evans Mills and among other matters considered the advisability of ordaining Finney. He was asked to preach, which he did without previous preparation, upon the subject, "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The sermon seemed to meet with the approbation of those who were present, although the opinion was expressed by some that he ought to confine his efforts to schoolhouses and country districts.

Little did the members of that Presbytery dream of the mighty fields of usefulness which lay before this young preacher who had lately forsaken the practice of law to proclaim "the unsearchable riches of Christ." The Almighty does not always commission the wise and the prudent as the instruments of His power. For the accomplishment of His purposes He may call a man from a miner's cabin as He did Martin Luther, or from a shoe shop as He did William Carey, or from behind the counter as He did Dwight L. Moody, or from a law office as He did Charles G. Finney. Neither human foresight nor wisdom can determine the results which may come from the labors of one whom God has called. However, it was voted to ordain Finney, and on the evening of July 1, 1824, in accordance with the usages

of the Presbyterian Church, he was solemnly set apart to the work of the Gospel ministry.

The ordination services were conducted in "the Methodist meeting house" at Evans Mills, Rev. A. W. Platt presiding, Rev. J. Clinton preaching the sermon, Rev. G. S. Boardman delivering the charge, Rev. S. F. Snowden offering the prayer of consecration, and Rev. E. Bliss and Rev. W. B. Stowe leading in the devotions at the opening and closing of the service.

Although Finney's original commission, as a home missionary to the northern parts of Jefferson County, was but for three months he remained at least six months on the field, the first part of his labors being devoted mainly to Evans Mills and the country round about, but apparently the greater portion of the remainder of his time was spent at Antwerp, where a powerful revival swept over the community. When he began his labors he met with some opposition. The church had been pastorless for some time and the congregation had become so weakened that services had been entirely discontinued and the church building closed. The landlord of the local tavern had been made the custodian of the key and on Finney's arrival had refused to open the church for services. Meetings were therefore begun in a friendly parlor, but such was the interest that was aroused that it became necessary to transfer the services to the schoolhouse. Soon the obdurate heart of the tavern keeper was softened and he opened the church to the multitudes who flocked to the services. Numbers were converted and the influence of the revival extended in all directions.

Not far from Antwerp was a community which had

been nicknamed Sodom on account of its supposed resemblance to Sodom of old. There was but a single praying man in the community and he had been nicknamed Lot. Finney was invited to preach in this place and, though unacquainted with the circumstances, by a strange coincidence selected as his text, "Up, get you out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city." He graphically described the condition of Sodom, its wickedness, and the urgency with which Lot was exhorted to escape. The people, supposing him to be offensively personal, took umbrage at his remarks. But in concluding his discourse he said that he understood that they had never had a religious service in the place before, and the inference was that it must be a very ungodly community. Taking this as the basis of his appeal he urged upon them the necessity for immediate repentance.

The resentment of the people was transformed into conviction, which became so intense that they began to fall on their knees and cry for mercy. This of course made an end to the sermon. Finney asked the old man called Lot to pray, but his stentorian voice was lost amidst the cries and groans of the penitent. Having another appointment that evening, Finney left the service in the hands of Lot.

So deep was the interest that the meeting continued all night, and in the morning some who had not yet found peace were taken from the schoolhouse to a private dwelling. The revival was as genuine as it was remarkable and from that day "Sodom" was a transformed community. Other neighborhoods were blessed with revivals and a strong church was built up at Ant-

werp, which has enjoyed a prosperous history down to the present day.

When Finney commenced his home missionary labors his physical health was greatly impaired. Physicians told him that he had consumption and his friends thought that he could live but a short time. He was told to preach but once a week and not more than half an hour at a time. An evidence of his strength of will, which also sheds considerable light upon his entire subsequent career, is that he proceeded to throw this advice to the winds and entered upon his labors with all of the ardor and enthusiasm of his nature. He said: "I preached out of doors. I preached in barns. I preached in schoolhouses. I preached nearly every night. I preached about two hours at a time. Before the six months were completed my health was entirely restored, my lungs were sound, and a glorious revival spread over all that region of country." It was this compelling force of his will that enabled him to win such triumphs for his Master and made him a mighty winner of souls.

In the spring of 1825, while on his way to Whitestone, Oneida County, to get his wife, whom he had married the October previous and from whom he had been separated all winter on account of the stress of his work, he stopped at Le Rayville to have his horse shod. When the people learned of his presence they besought him, since they had no church edifice, to preach that afternoon in the village schoolhouse. The building was packed and such was the interest that he decided to preach again that evening. The interest increasing still further at this service, he made arrange-

ments with one of the brethren to take his horse and cutter and go after his wife, while he devoted his attention to the revival which had already commenced. A remarkable work of grace was wrought at Le Rayville and in the adjoining town of Rutland.

Finney next visited Gouverneur, where a widespread revival attended his labors. There were many notable converts, among them several Universalists and infidels whose arguments vanished before the incisive logic of the earnest revivalist. He was assisted in this place by "Father" Nash, quite as remarkable a character in his way as Finney himself. When the latter was ordained by the Presbytery at Evans Mills, Nash was present, but at that time was in a low state spiritually. After a subsequent illness which brought him into a deeper religious experience he devoted himself with great earnestness to the work of saving souls.

Nash had remarkable power in prayer and was in the habit of making a praying list of persons for whose conversion he daily prayed in secret. It was avowed by his detractors that it was impossible for him to pray in secret since, whether he went into his closet or the woods, he prayed with such vehemence that he could be heard half a mile away. A man once heard him praying in the forest and, although he could not distinguish a word that was uttered, the prayer so impressed him with the reality of religion, that he could find no peace until he dedicated his heart to the Lord. The answers to his prayers sometimes seemed almost miraculous, for he did not confine his "list" to those whom he thought might be reached by the revival, but the most

obdurate and unlikely cases were made the subjects of prayer, with results that were truly astounding. He often accompanied Finney to the communities whither he went for the purpose of sustaining him in prayer.

"Father" Nash sometimes did things which did not commend themselves to Finney's judgment. At Gouverneur, for example, a number of young men banded themselves together to resist the influences of the revival. One evening at the close of his remarks Nash addressed them thus: "Now mark me, young men, God will break your ranks in less than one week, either by converting some of you or sending some of you to hell. He will do this as certainly as the Lord is my God!" Finney stood aghast at this declaration and felt that his coworker had gone too far. The leader of the young men, however, was soon converted and at Finney's suggestion exhorted his companions to turn at once to Christ. Before the end of the week nearly all of the young men had ceased their opposition and had consecrated their hearts to Jesus Christ.

From Gouverneur Finney went to De Kalb. A spirit of bitterness had long existed between the Presbyterians and Methodists in that place. It seems that some years before the Methodists had enjoyed a revival in which there had been a number of instances of "falling under the power of God," which met with a spirit of opposition on the part of the Presbyterians. During Finney's labors there were several cases of "falling under the power of God," but strange to say all who were so affected were Presbyterians, and this led to such confessions and explanations as to effect a mutual

reconciliation. Conversions were numerous and the influence of the revival extended as far as the town of Ogdensburg, sixteen miles distant.

Early in the fall of 1825 Finney, accompanied by his wife, went to Utica to attend the synod of which he was a member. On his return he was met by Rev. G. W. Gale, his former pastor and theological instructor, who had retired temporarily from the ministry on account of ill health and was residing on a farm near the town of Western, Oneida County. He persuaded Finney to preach there the following Sunday. The Presbyterian Church was not only pastorless but in a low spiritual condition. On Sunday, however, the church was packed and such was the interest that various meetings were appointed at surrounding schoolhouses during the following week.

Finney was greatly exercised in prayer, and others, he found, were in the same state of mind. A Mrs. H—, a frail delicate woman, was so affected that her husband became alarmed over her condition. During the week Finney called, and when she heard his voice she came into the room with face illumined and exclaimed: "Brother Finney, the Lord has come! This work will spread all over this region! A cloud of mercy overhangs us all; and we shall see such a work of grace as we have never yet seen!" To her husband this was unintelligible, but Finney accepted it as a token of the victory of prevailing prayer. A great revival followed, the influence of which was felt in all directions and which extended as far as Rome and Utica.

Of the revival at Western, Mr. Gale wrote: "On the last of September, 1825, the Rev. Charles G. Finney

arrived in this town (after a short visit to recruit his health in this county), on his way to the county of St. Lawrence, where he has been laboring with success, and where the people were anxiously waiting his return. . . . He commenced preaching three times on the Sabbath, and almost every evening in the week in different parts of the town, besides visiting during the day from house to house. Professors of religion were urged to 'pray without ceasing.' . . . Sinners were pressed with the duty of immediate repentance by every truth and motive which the word of God presents, and in language plain and pointed. These efforts were not permitted to be made in vain, even in this unpromising field. Christians were humbled for their past unfaithfulness, and led to pray as they had not prayed before. Sinners began to inquire what they must do. Convictions and conversions multiplied and spread through the town. In some instances whole households were converted. . . . The number of converts in this town, and that part of Lee where the people attended meetings here, is supposed to be about one hundred and forty. Thirty-seven have united with the Presbyterian Church on confession of faith; a number with other denominations; and many have not yet united with any church."

While the revival at Western was still in progress a company of young people, out of motives of curiosity and for purposes of amusement, drove over from Rome to attend the meetings, but so deeply were they influenced by what they saw and heard, that although they "came to scoff" they "remained to pray." They carried the revival spirit back to Rome, and not long

afterwards Rev. Moses Gillett, pastor of the Congregational Church there, attended some of the meetings at Western. He was so impressed that he proposed an exchange of pulpits with Mr. Finney, to which the latter gave a somewhat reluctant consent. As the Sabbath approached he regretted the arrangement, fearful lest the revival spirit at Western might be quenched. He went, however, and preached with marked effect. An inquiry meeting was appointed for the following evening. A deep interest was awakened which led to a revival that continued for several weeks, so that Mr. Finney was obliged to give his whole attention to the work at Rome.

Of the results of this revival Mr. Gillett wrote: "Worldly business was to a great extent suspended. Religion was the principal subject of conversation in our streets, stores, and even taverns. Merchants' and mechanics' shops were many of them closed in the evening, that all might attend meeting. . . . All classes of people were affected. Many who had regularly attended worship for twenty years, and lived through revivals unmoved, were now made to tremble and bow before the cross. Four lawyers, four physicians, all the merchants who were not professors before, and men of the first respectability in the place are hopeful converts. . . . In March one hundred and sixty-seven were received into the church upon profession of faith. The whole number received is two hundred and eighty-four. Upwards of thirty have united with the Methodist Church, and some with the Baptists and Episcopalians. The number of hopeful converts cannot be accurately stated. Probably not far from five hundred. Some of

them were from adjacent towns. . . . A marked reformation of morals is too apparent to be denied. The Sabbath is more strictly observed. Intemperance and profane swearing are checked. More good feeling in families and neighborhoods prevails. The church is blessed with harmony. In truth it may be said these Christians love one another."

From Rome the influence of the revival spread to surrounding communities. At Verona about one hundred were converted. At Camden, which was visited by Mr. Finney's coworker, "Father" Nash, about one hundred and fifty united with the Presbyterian Church and a number with the Methodist. Rev. Ira Manly, who supplied the Presbyterian Church at Boonville, visited Rome and on his return gave an account of the revival there. Meetings were inaugurated which were largely attended, Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians participating in the services. Sixty-seven united with the Presbyterian Church and many with the Baptists and Methodists.

Whitesborough was also visited with a season of refreshing. Rev. John Frost, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, wrote: "The revival in Rome excited a deep interest here. Some of the members visited that place, and returned with increased feeling. . . . The latter part of February, the attention began to extend, and in March was more powerful than anything I have witnessed here before. . . . One hundred and sixteen have, upon examination, united with the Presbyterian Church. Forty-five of them are heads of families. About one hundred have united with the Methodists, seventy-eight with the Baptists, and three or four with

the Episcopalians. . . . The whole number who have indulged hope is not far from three hundred. Several, and especially among the young, have not united. A number who visited the place from abroad became subjects."

Up to this time Mr. Finney's work had attracted a local attention only. In fact, at his entrance upon the ministry he had no conception of the wide fields of usefulness to which he should be called, nor of the important service which he was to render to the cause of religion both in this country and abroad.

He said: "Having had no training for the ministry, I did not expect or desire to labor in large towns or cities, or minister to cultivated communities. I intended to go to the new settlements, and preach in school-houses and barns and groves, as best I could." In accordance with this purpose his earlier labors had been in home missionary territory, but his work at Rome may be said to be the commencement of a new era. From this time he was to assume the more important role of a general revivalist. For this work he was eminently fitted by nature, and a providential preparation had been afforded in his earlier labors to introduce him to wider fields of usefulness.

The progress of the revival at Rome had created no small degree of interest in the neighboring town of Utica. One of the prominent citizens at Rome was the president of a bank at Utica. He was not a Christian and the first time he heard Finney he said: "That man is mad. I should not be surprised if he set the town on fire." At first he refused to go to the meetings, but not long afterwards at a meeting of the directors of the

bank, he was rallied on the state of things at Rome. He replied: "Gentlemen, say what you will, there is something very remarkable in the state of things at Rome. Certainly no human power or eloquence has produced what we see there. I cannot understand it. You say it will soon subside. No doubt the intensity of feeling that is now in Rome will soon subside, or the people will become insane. But gentlemen, there is no accounting for that state of feeling by any philosophy, unless there is something Divine in it." Within a short time the banker was converted.

As the reports of the revival at Rome were noised abroad in Utica a spirit of prayer came upon some of the people in that place, one woman in particular being so exercised that for two days and nights she prayed incessantly until her strength had become fairly exhausted. She could not rest unless someone was praying for her friends and neighbors. About this time Rev. Dr. Samuel Clark Aiken, pastor of the First Presbyterian Church of Utica, invited Finney to attend the funeral of a prominent elder in his church. Signs of a revival becoming manifest, he was urged to remain. As soon as he could he made arrangements to transfer the base of his operations from Rome to Utica. Within a short time a powerful revival was effected, more than five hundred conversions being reported. Such was the interest that the leading hotel became a center of religious influence, and transients who stopped for a lodging or a meal were converted before proceeding on their way.

Of this revival Dr. Aiken, the pastor, wrote: "The probable number of converts in Utica is about five

hundred. . . . Not far from sixty persons, some of whom were travellers, who 'turned in to tarry but for a night,' or day or week; others belonging to the towns around, experienced, as we trust, the grace of God in this village. More than a hundred, the subjects of the revival, have united with the First Presbyterian Church; numbers with the Methodists and Baptists. . . . Never was so large a church more happily united than we have been during this revival, and it is so still. . . . Some few individuals have differed from their brethren, with regard to the propriety of some measures; but I have seen none who were blind to the mighty hand of God that was bowing down rebel sinners on every side, and none so hardened in unbelief as not to adore and rejoice in it. The society, also, is evidently strengthened and built up."

One of the notable conversions at Utica was that of Theodore Weld who afterwards became prominent in antislavery circles. At this time he was a student in Hamilton College and through the persuasions of an aunt was induced to attend the meetings. He was virulent in his opposition to Finney's work, declaring that it was nothing but fanaticism and boasting to his fellow students that he would not be moved. He chanced to meet Finney after he had heard him once and abused him most shamefully. Finney spoke a few words and left him. Such was the conviction which followed this brief conversation that on that very night, in an agony of spirit and in a rebellious frame of mind, Weld paced the floor of his room until daylight, when he was overborne with a sense of his lost and sinful condition. He became submissive, gave his heart to God, and the

following night made a public confession before the whole congregation. From that time he manifested a consistent Christian spirit and rendered effective service in the work of the revival.

During the progress of this revival the Presbytery of Oneida convened in Utica. At one of the sessions an aged Scotch minister made a speech violently denouncing revivals of religion. Fearing that his words might result in checking the influence of the revival several of the brethren gave themselves to prayer, interceding with Divine Providence to counteract the effects of that speech. The next morning the man was found dead in bed.

From Utica the influence of the revival extended to the surrounding communities, the following being a characteristic incident: Visiting the village of New York Mills to preach one evening, Mr. Finney on the following morning was invited to visit a large cotton manufactory located in the place. As he passed through, the operatives seemed strangely agitated. In one of the rooms where a number of young women were weaving one of them paused at her loom and made some trifling remark to her companion, at which both laughed. With an expression of pain upon his countenance Finney stopped a moment and gave her a searching look. On observing it she ceased laughing and became so agitated that her thread broke. She tried to mend it, but overcome by her emotions she soon burst into tears. Others were similarly affected, whereupon the proprietor, although not a Christian, said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill, and let the people attend to religion; it is more important that our souls should be saved

than that the factory should run." Within a few days nearly every girl employed in the mill professed conversion.

While the revival at Utica was still in progress the Rev. Dirck C. Lansing visited the city. Dr. Lansing was pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Auburn and one of the founders of Auburn Theological Seminary. So deeply impressed was he by Finney's work that he urged him to visit Auburn. In response to this invitation he went there in the summer of 1826 and "preached with great power and marked success." Multitudes were converted and, as his custom was at this time, he preached in many of the neighboring towns and villages. In consequence the influence of the revival became wide reaching and extended as far as Skaneateles and Cayuga.

In Auburn a spirit of opposition manifested itself and a number of prominent men withdrew from Dr. Lansing's church to form a new congregation. Most of these men were unconverted and it is interesting to note that five years afterwards, when Finney, journeying from Rochester to Boston, was detained a few days in Auburn on account of illness, these very men signed a petition requesting him to overlook their former opposition and conduct meetings in their church. Although he had paid his stage fare and had directed the driver to call him at two o'clock the following morning, when this request was sent to his room, after he had retired, he sent down word to those who were in waiting: "Go to the stage office and withdraw my name from the list of passengers." He remained in the city three or four weeks and a gracious revival followed.

There were numerous accessions to the two Presbyterian churches and to the Methodist and Baptist churches as well.

One of the converts in this second revival was a whiskey distiller, whose business at that time was considered quite respectable. He had been among those who had opposed Mr. Finney at the time of his first visit and had left the church to form the new congregation. Curious to hear what the preacher had to say he dropped into the services one evening. His interest was aroused, his reason was convinced, and being made to realize that he was a sinner, straightway he was brought to repentance. He at once ordered the fires in his distillery to be extinguished, and deliberately broke open his casks of liquor and allowed the contents to flow into the gutter.

From Auburn Finney was invited to Troy by the Rev. N. S. S. Beman and the session of his church. The greater part of the autumn and winter of 1826-1827 was accordingly spent in this city. During the progress of the revival certain disaffected members of Dr. Beman's church brought vexatious charges against him before the presbytery. These charges were not based upon heresy or anything bearing upon his moral character, but related to certain infelicities in his family life and to the methods which he, in conjunction with Finney, was using to promote the revival. The investigations of the presbytery which took Dr. Beman from the meetings for a time, resulted in his complete vindication. In the meanwhile Finney had kept on preaching so that the revival went on with unabated interest and power. In fact the trial of Dr. Beman seemed to

help rather than hinder the work and, as the charges had been brought on account of the revival quite as much as against Dr. Beman, his opponents were greatly discomfited at the outcome of the trial.

While the revival was in progress a prominent young woman from New Lebanon came to Troy to purchase a ball dress. Her friends in the city invited her to attend the meetings. She did so with the result that she took back a new heart in place of the new dress and commenced to pray and labor for a revival. Through her efforts such an interest was awakened that she besought Mr. Finney to come and preach. He did so and in consequence a revival swept over the place resulting in the conversion of most of the prominent men in the community.

While the work at New Lebanon was in progress a convention met there to investigate the methods and measures ascribed to Finney. This, however, did not seem in any way to detract from the interest of the revival which swept forward with power undiminished. The occasion, the purpose, and the results of the New Lebanon Convention, as it was called, will be considered in the following chapter.

Chapter V

Opposition to New Measures

For some time there had been a growing antagonism to the methods and measures of Finney. Already he had encountered opposition of a certain sort. During the progress of his work in Oneida County "Father" Nash, in a letter written under date of May 11, 1826, had said: "The work of God moves forward in power, in some places against dreadful opposition. Mr. Finney and I have both been hanged in effigy. We have frequently been disturbed in our religious meetings. Sometimes the opposers make a noise in the house of God; sometimes they gather round the house and stone it, and discharge guns. There is almost as much writing, intrigue, and lying, and reporting of lies, as there would be if we were on the eve of a presidential election. Oh, what a world! How much it hates the truth! How unwilling to be saved! But I think the work will go on."

In spite of these things Finney had gone right on with his work and had witnessed uninterrupted triumphs in his revival labors. But the opposition which now confronted him was of an altogether different character and was brought about chiefly by false and exaggerated statements of his work and methods which had been

sent to the religious press by his enemies. It was alleged that his meetings were boisterous and prolonged to unseasonable hours, that he was harsh and rude in the pulpit and given to saying unkind and censorious things, that he was irreverent in his prayers and prayed for people by name without their consent, that he encouraged the practice of women speaking and praying in promiscuous assemblies, that he had requested persons to come forward to the anxious seat or to rise in public to signify that they had given their hearts to God and would attend to religion, and that he had advertised his meetings by means of sensational handbills.

These allegations for the most part were untrue. At the crisis of his work at Evans Mills Finney had asked the people to rise, and on a single occasion at Rutland he had asked those who wished to give their hearts to God to take the front seat. Otherwise he had never used either of these measures until the great Rochester revival in the winter of 1830-1831.

He and his friends, moreover, were accused of going into churches and parishes without invitation, and even in defiance of the wishes of settled pastors. Writing of this "Father" Nash said: "When Mr. Finney and I began our race, we had no thought of going amongst ministers. Our highest ambition was to go where there was neither minister nor reformation, and try to look up the lost sheep for whom no man cared. We began, and the Lord prospered us. We soon became the subjects of much speculation, and were soon drawn into contact with ministers. But we go into no man's parish, unless called. Ministers who do not want us have only

to refrain from inviting us into their parishes, and we shall not trouble them. We have room enough to work, and work enough to do."

The most active opponent to Finney's work in the region where he had labored was the Rev. William R. Weeks, pastor of the Congregational Church at Paris Hill. He was a "Hopkinsian," an advocate of the system of theology propounded by Samuel Hopkins, although he had some leanings towards the teachings of Dr. Nathaniel Emmons. He held that "both sin and holiness were produced by a direct act of Almighty Power; that God made men sinners or holy at His sovereign discretion, but in both cases by a direct act of Almighty Power, an act as irresistible as that of creation itself; that, in fact, God was the only proper agent of the universe, and that all creatures acted, only as they were moved and compelled to act, by His irresistible power; that every sin in the universe, both of men and devils, was the result of a direct irresistible act on the part of God."

Unable to impose his views upon the members of the Presbytery with which he was connected, Mr. Weeks withdrew and organized the Oneida Association, which had but a feeble existence at the time of which we are writing and which was completely dominated by Mr. Weeks, who busied himself in writing against Finney to the religious leaders of New England, besides publishing pamphlets and preparing articles for the religious press.

Under his direction a pastoral letter was sent out by the Oneida Association in which Finney and his friends

were charged with "calling men hard names"; "reporting great, powerful revivals which afterwards came to little or nothing"; "ostentation and noise"; "not guarding against false conversions"; "injudicious treatment of young converts, such as turning them into exhorters and teachers"; "giving heed to impressions, feelings, and supposed revelations"; "allowing anybody and everybody to speak and pray in promiscuous meetings of whatever age, sex, or qualification"; using means of exciting fears, such as saying to a sinner: "If you don't repent today, you will be in hell tomorrow"; "you are a reprobate, you are going straight to hell"; familiar use of the words "devil," "hell," "cursed," "damned," in a tone and manner like profane swearing; calling elderly people, by youths and boys, "old hypocrites," "old apostates"; imprecations in prayer; interference, by ministers and others, with congregations to which they did not belong; female prayer and exhortations in public; etc., etc.

In view of the accusations made in this document the Oneida Presbytery appointed the Rev. Messrs. Frost, Aiken, and Gale to inquire of the writer of it "whether he has any evidence that any member of this Presbytery used any of the exceptionable expressions quoted" by him, and this committee subsequently reported that "he had refused to give them any information" on the subject.

Another factor in the opposition was the Unitarian Church at Trenton, New York, a prominent member of which wrote a pamphlet, the scurrilous nature of which may be surmised from its title page:

A
BUNKER HILL CONTEST
A.D., 1826.

Between the "Holy Alliance," for the Establishment of Hierarchy and Ecclesiastical Domination over the Human Mind

ON THE ONE SIDE,

And the Asserters of Free Inquiry, Bible Religion, Christian Freedom and Civil Liberty

ON THE OTHER

THE REV. CHARLES FINNEY,

"Home Missionary" and High Priest of the Alliance in the Interior of New York.
Headquarters: County of Oneida.

In this pamphlet it was alleged that concerted action was being taken among the Presbyterians, especially, for a national church, by whose strength "all the opposition of infidelity would be *borne down and overpowered.*"

Finney's inquiry meetings were described as follows: "They are generally, if not always, held in the night. The room is darkened, so that persons can only see to walk and discover each other; and the reign of uni-

versal silence is interrupted only by now and then a dolorous groan from different parts of the room. The leader or leaders tread softly about, as they proceed, whispering to each individual some question or questions, such as 'Do you love God?' etc." It was affirmed, moreover, that "in a circle of the anxious, Mr. Finney would go round, and, by putting his eyes on each individual for a few seconds, tell the exact state of their mind; and would congratulate one and another with their new hope, even though they were strangers."

To such charges a committee of the Oneida Presbytery made the following reply: "Why did not these authors, after describing the darkness of the rooms at these meetings, say that Mr. Finney professed to have powers of vision that he could see the faces of the converts in the dark, as well as 'tell the exact state of their minds'? This would have increased the wonder." This committee concluded their review of these misrepresentations and slanders with the following observations:

"Brethren, we see on record that hatred which exists extensively against those revivals of religion with which our churches have from time to time been blessed. . . . For several years past a spirit of bitterness has been manifesting itself, particularly in this State, against a faithful ministry and against the benevolent exertions of the church of Christ. This moral poison has been circulating among a considerable portion of the community, in scurrilous newspapers and pamphlets, which have passed unnoticed. Among the unenlightened and irreligious they have had more influence than Christians have generally supposed. . . . A great cry is raised about the immense sums which are contributed to carry

into effect the plans of benevolence. But when tenfold more is expended in the grog-shop, in the theatre, and in gambling houses, these opposers manifest no uneasiness, and will not unite with Christians to put an end to such shameful waste of time, and money, and health, and life itself."

At a meeting of the Presbytery of Oneida, held at Whitesborough, September 8, 1826, a committee consisting of Rev. John Frost, Rev. Moses Gillet, and Rev. Noah Coe was appointed to report on the revivals within the bounds of that Presbytery. The report, or *Narrative of the Revival of Religion in the County of Oneida; particularly in the bounds of the Presbytery of Oneida, in the year 1826,* is contained in a bulky pamphlet consisting of sixty-seven closely printed octavo pages. In a footnote the members of the committee expressed in this way their judgment of Mr. Finney, the chief promoter of these revivals:

"He possesses a discriminating and self-balanced mind; has a good share of courage and decision; possesses naturally a good temper; is frank and magnanimous in his deportment—ardent and persevering in the performance of the duties of his office; exhibits as much discretion and judgment, as those who may think him deficient in these qualities would do, did they possess his zeal and activity; and on the whole, is as well calculated to be extensively useful in promoting revivals of religion as any man of whom we have knowledge. To say that he never errs, is more than can, with truth be said of any man, who has ever done much to promote the temporal or spiritual interests of his fellow men."

The *Narrative of the Revival of Religion in the*

County of Oneida consists of three parts, the first of which contains accounts of the revival, written by the pastors of the churches which had been visited with "seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." The second part consists of Remarks on the Character of this Revival of Religion, as follows:

"1. More than three thousand are indulging hope that they have become reconciled to God through the Redeemer. About half this number have already united with the Presbyterian and Congregational churches, and a large proportion of the remainder with the Baptist and Methodist churches. Never before have the churches in this region been blessed with so great a shower of divine grace. . . .

"2. This revival has continued longer, particularly in some of our societies, than has been usual in former revivals. . . .

"3. Considering the number of converts, and the time that has elapsed since the revival commenced, the instances of backsliding have been fewer than usual. . . .

"4. In this revival there has been less appearance of mere sympathy and excitement of the passions, unaccompanied with *conviction of sin,* than usual. . . .

"5. This revival has been characterized by a remarkable spirit of prayer. Often it has been said—'Christians pray as they have never prayed before.' Many have been in deep distress, and felt what it was to *travail* in *birth* for souls.

"6. Unusual strength of faith in the promises and threatenings of God has been manifested in many of our churches. . . .

"7. An unusual spirit of prayer has prevailed among

converts, and they have manifested a disposition to converse with their friends and others on the subject of religion. . . .

"8. This revival has extended to all classes of society. . . . Many men of wealth and learning and talents have been converted. . . . Many who had embraced universalism and other errors, have fled from their refuges of *lies* to lay hold of the hope set before them in the gospel. . . .

"9. Great heart-searchings among professors have characterized this revival. . . .

"10. Converts, especially during the greatest excitement, have manifested more joy and stronger hope than in any preceding revivals among us. . . .

"11. Much opposition has been made to this revival. . . . False reports have been circulated. Gross misrepresentations have been made of the preaching, and other means which have been employed to promote the work. Prejudices have thus been excited in the minds of some, who are doubtless the friends of religion, but who have not been in circumstances favorable to judge for themselves. It is not to be expected, that men actuated by the best motives, and pursuing with hallowed zeal the most noble objects, should act with perfect wisdom and discretion. But from the preceding accounts, and from personal observation, the committee feel warranted in saying that ministers and churches have exhibited as much sound wisdom and discretion, as has ever been exhibited in any revival of which they have knowledge. Yea, we believe that there has been an unusual spirit of prayer to God for that wisdom which is profitable to direct.

"It would savor of weakness and spiritual pride in our churches, to justify everything which has been said and done, in public and private, by the friends of the revival. But we believe it a duty we owe to the cause of truth, to say, that most of the opposition has been excited by that preaching, and those means, which have met the approbation of the great Head of the Church."

The third section of the *Narrative of the Revival of Religion in the County of Oneida* was a description of "Means which appear to have been blessed in promoting this Revival"; which in brief were as follows:

"1. Seasons of fasting and prayer. . . . 2. Confession of sin in churches. . . . 3. Church discipline. . . . 4. Visiting from house to house. . . . 5. Preaching the gospel, its doctrines and precepts, its promises and threatenings, with *great plainness and earnestness.* 6. Union of feeling and effort in churches has promoted this revival. . . . 7. Meetings of inquiry have been greatly blessed. 8. Avoiding disputes upon minor points. . . . 9. Urging awakened sinners to *immediate* repentance and reconciliation to God. . . . 10. The visits of ministers, professors, and others, where revivals had commenced, have had a powerful effect in extending the work. . . . 11. The preaching and labors of evangelists have been a very obvious and efficient means of originating and carrying forward this work. . . . 12. United, agonizing, persevering prayer. . . . 13. The instructions given in Sabbath schools and Bible classes have been eminently blessed. . . ."

Notwithstanding the description of the character of the revival in Oneida County and the means which had

been used to promote it, as set forth by the men who had been associated with Finney and who were, therefore, best qualified to speak in his defense against the scurrilous attacks which had been made upon him and his work, nevertheless a great deal of uneasiness was created, particularly in New England, over the measures and methods which had been ascribed to him. Foremost among those to take a stand against Finney, by reason of these false reports, were Drs. Asahel Nettleton and Lyman Beecher. Dr. Nettleton had been a very successful evangelist and had been greatly blessed in his labors in New York and New England, but at this time he had ceased active evangelistic labors on account of failing health. He was nine years older than Finney and the latter held him in high esteem.

In the autumn of 1826 Finney paid him a visit at Albany and wrote: "He was the guest of a family with which I was acquainted. I spent part of an afternoon with him, and conversed with him in regard to his doctrinal views; especially the views held by the Dutch and Presbyterian churches in regard to the nature of moral depravity. I found that he entirely agreed with me, so far as I had opportunity to converse with him, on all the points upon which we conversed. Indeed there had been no complaint, by Dr. Beecher, or Mr. Nettleton, of our teaching in those revivals. They did not complain that we did not teach what they regarded as the true Gospel. What they complained of was something that they supposed was highly objectionable in the measures that we used."

Nettleton seems not to have been quite frank towards Finney on this occasion; for when the latter

told him that he intended to remain in Albany and hear him preach in the evening he manifested great uneasiness and remarked that he "must not be seen with him." So Finney went and sat in the gallery with a judge who had been in college with Nettleton. What he saw was sufficient to convince him that he could expect no advice or instruction from Nettleton, but rather that he was there to take a stand against him.

Nettleton himself was not altogether free from the charge of being an innovator. Dr. E. N. Kirk says of him that "he was not quite fair, for I am informed that no Revivalist or Evangelist in our day has so abounded in new measures, contrivances, and management, as he." Nettleton, however, was broken in health and seems to have been unduly influenced by the reports which had reached him concerning Finney's labors.

Alarmed by adverse reports about Finney's work and greatly disturbed lest a lasting injury should be done to true revivals, Dr. Nettleton, under date of January 13, 1827, wrote a letter to Dr. Aiken of Utica, criticising the spirit of denunciation which had grown out of the revivals in the West, condemning the practice of permitting females to pray in promiscuous assemblies, and also that of praying for people by name, intimating that such and such persons were unconverted, which, he affirmed, had become "an engine of public slander of the worst form."

Referring to this letter in his *Autobiography* Finney says: "Mr. Nettleton wrote some letters to Mr. Aiken, with whom I was laboring; in which it was manifest that he was very much mistaken in regard to the character of those revivals. Mr. Aiken showed me those

letters; and they were handed around among the ministers in the neighborhood, as they were intended to be. Among them was the one in which Mr. Nettleton stated fully what he regarded as objectionable in the conduct of these revivals; but as no such things as he complained of were done in those revivals, or had been known at all, we took no notice of the letters than to read them, and let them pass. Mr. Aiken, however, replied privately to one or two of them, assuring Mr. Nettleton that no such things were done."

The misapprehensions of Dr. Nettleton were shared by so many in New England and elsewhere that a number of representative Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, including both the friends and opponents of Mr. Finney, at the invitation of Dr. Lyman Beecher and Dr. N. S. S. Beman, met at New Lebanon, New York, to consider certain differences of opinion which were "supposed to exist among themselves and their brethren in respect to revivals of religion." This convention met at the house of Mr. Betts, Wednesday, July 18, 1827, and, with the exception of Sunday, continued in session until Thursday, July 26, when it was dissolved.

This "Convention of Ministers of the Gospel" was made up of the following: Asahel Norton, D.D., Clinton, New York; Lyman Beecher, D.D., Boston, Massachusetts; Moses Gillett, Rome, New York; Nathan S. S. Beman, Troy, New York; Dirck C. Lansing, D.D., Auburn, New York; Heman Humphrey, D.D., Amherst College, Massachusetts; John Frost, Whitesborough, New York; Asahel Nettleton, Connecticut; William R. Weeks, Paris, New York; Justin

Edwards, Andover, Massachusetts; Henry Smith, Camden, New York; Charles G. Finney, Oneida County, New York; Caleb J. Tenney, Weathersfield, Connecticut; Joel Hawes, Hartford, Connecticut; George W. Gale, Oneida Academy, New York; Silas Churchill, New Lebanon, New York; Samuel C. Aiken, Utica, New York; and Henry R. Weed, Albany, New York. Heman Humphrey, D.D., was elected moderator and William R. Weeks and Henry Smith, scribes.

A series of resolutions was first adopted commending revivals in general, and expressing the hope that greater revivals were "to be expected, than have ever yet existed." Differences in method and relative imperfections attending revivals did not necessarily impair their usefulness, but it was affirmed that the "infirmity, indiscretion and wickedness of man may be the means of preventing the conversion of more souls than have been converted during the revivals."

These resolutions having been adopted unanimously by the convention, a series of resolutions was then introduced condemning the very measures of which Finney had been falsely accused in the revivals which he had conducted. His friends, therefore, raised the objection that these resolutions were liable to misconstruction and would lead to the belief that the accusations had been well founded, but to this the reply was made that they were merely prospective and designed as a safeguard against possible abuses in the future. With this understanding Finney gave assent to the resolutions.

However, from the attitude of Lyman Beecher, Asahel Nettleton, and others, it was evident that they

had come to New Lebanon to take a stand against the revivals conducted by Finney and to justify their opposition to the measures supposed to be employed by him. When the question was raised as to the sources of their information upon certain points Dr. Beecher replied, "We have not come here to be catechised, and our spiritual dignity forbids us to answer any such questions." When the question came up as to the truthfulness of the reports which had been circulated, both Nettleton and Beecher took the position that the testimony of Finney and the ministers who had been associated with him should be excluded because they were the objects of censure; therefore it was not admissible since they would be testifying in their own behalf. Dr. Humphrey, the moderator, however, insisted that they were the very actors in the case, they knew what they had done, and for that reason the convention should receive their statements without hesitation. To this all assented except Beecher and Nettleton.

In view of all the facts it is not easy to excuse, much less to justify, the attitude of Nettleton and Beecher. Both had been the undoubted friends and promoters of revivals, the one as an honored and successful evangelist, the other as an evangelistic pastor, the chief end of whose ministry had been the winning of souls. Prejudice, however, is a much more formidable foe to overcome than reason. It may mislead the best of men and blind their eyes to the truth. Nettleton and Beecher had been so influenced by the current misrepresentations about Finney and his work that in all good conscience they thought that they must oppose him and wage an unceasing warfare against the

methods and measures of which he was supposed to be the exponent. They had such confidence in the alleged facts which had been brought to their attention by the opponents of Finney that they could credit nothing to the contrary.

After the adoption of the resolutions which had been presented by his adversaries Finney and his friends had their day in court.* Dr. N. S. S. Beman now sponsored a series of propositions designed to rebuke the spirit of opposition which had been engendered. Beecher, Edwards, Weeks and others declined to vote for these propositions on the ground that they did "not appear" to them "to be, in the course of divine Providence called for." The propositions, however, were passed by the convention as follows:

"As human instrumentality must be employed in promoting revivals of religion, some things undesirable may be expected to accompany them; and as those things are often proclaimed abroad and magnified, great caution should be exercised in listening to unfavorable reports.

"Although revivals of religion may be so imperfectly conducted, as to be attended with disastrous consequences to the church and the souls of men; yet, it is also true, that the best conducted revivals are liable to be stigmatized and opposed by lukewarm professors and enemies of evangelical truth.

*The friends who stood so loyally by him at this time, Finney ever held in grateful remembrance. His eldest son, born three years later, was named Charles Beman in honor of Dr. Beman of Troy, New York, and his second son, born five years later, was named Frederick Norton in honor of Dr. Norton of Clinton, New York.

"Attempts to remedy evils existing in revivals of religion may, through the infirmity and indiscretion and wickedness of man, do more injury, and ruin more souls, than those evils which such attempts are intended to correct.

"In public meetings for religious worship, composed of men and women, females are not to pray.

"The writing of letters to individuals in the congregations of acknowledged ministers, or circulating letters which have been written by others, complaining of measures which may have been employed in revivals of religion; or visiting the congregations of such ministers, and conferring with opposers, without conversing with the ministers of such places, and speaking against measures which have been adopted; or for ministers residing in the congregations of settled pastors to pursue the same course; thus strengthening the hands of the wicked, and weakening the hands of settled pastors, are breaches of Christian charity, and ought to be carefully avoided.

"In preaching the Gospel, language ought not to be employed with the intention of irritating or giving offence; but, that preaching is not the best adapted to do good and save souls, which the hearer does not perceive to be applicable to his own character."

As events shaped themselves in the convention, matters did not turn out altogether to the liking of Drs. Nettleton and Beecher. After the fourth day Nettleton absented himself from the remaining sessions. On his homeward way, in the presence of the keeper of a wayside inn, Dr. Beecher dropped the remark, "We crossed

the mountains expecting to meet a company of boys, but we found them to be full grown men."

The next year at the session of the Presbyterian General Assembly in Philadelphia the following document was signed and published:

"The subscribers having had opportunity for free conversation on certain subjects pertaining to revivals of religion, concerning which we have differed, are of the opinion that the general interests of religion would not be promoted by any further publications on those subjects, or personal discussions, we do hereby engage to cease from all publications, correspondences, conversations, and conduct designed and calculated to keep those subjects before the public mind; and that so far as our influence may avail, we will exert it to induce our friends on either side to do the same."

To this document were affixed the following signatures: Lyman Beecher, Dirck C. Lansing, S. C. Aiken, A. D. Eddy, C. G. Finney, Sylvester Holmes, Ebenezer Cheever, John Frost, Nathan S. S. Beman, Noah Coe, E. W. Gilbert, and Joel Parker.

The New Lebanon convention and the events leading thereto constitute a painful chapter in the life of the great revivalist. Nor did the opposition at once subside. Throughout his lifetime he was subject to misapprehension because of the methods and measures which had been attributed to him. While it doubtless interfered with his usefulness for a time, in the end it brought him more prominently before the church than ever and introduced him to wider fields of service and usefulness.

Chapter VI

Evangelistic Labors

Although the convention at New Lebanon had been characterized by more or less acerbity of spirit, as has been stated, it did not affect seriously the revival which was then in progress. From New Lebanon the work extended to Stephentown where Mr. Finney labored for a time with excellent results.

Before he went to Stephentown, the Rev. Mr. Gilbert, pastor of the Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, visited his father who resided in New Lebanon. So deeply impressed was he by the character of Finney's work that he gave him an urgent invitation to labor with his church at Wilmington. At the close of his labors at Stephentown this invitation was accepted and as a consequence an extensive revival visited that church and community.

While at Wilmington Mr. Finney was invited to Philadelphia. At first he preached but twice a week, alternating his services between that city and Wilmington, going back and forth by boat on the Delaware River. The interest soon became such, however, that he was obliged to devote his whole time to the work in the City of Brotherly Love.

The Rev. James Patterson, with whose church he labored at first in Philadelphia, held to the old school theology of the Presbyterians, whose views were then in the ascendency at Princeton. Soon after the commencement of his labors, Mr. Patterson said, "Brother Finney, if the Presbyterian ministers in this city find out your views and what you are preaching, they will hunt you out of the city as they would a wolf."

Matters, however, did not turn out as Mr. Patterson had predicted. On the contrary Finney was invited to preach in nearly every Presbyterian church in the city. One sermon, There is one God and one Mediator between God and Man, he was asked to repeat seven different evenings in succession in as many different churches. Finally it was decided that he should confine all of his efforts to some one church centrally located. A large German church was placed at his disposal and it became the scene of many triumphs. The whole city was stirred. His congregations often numbered three thousand persons and upwards. Multitudes among all classes of society were converted. Mr. Finney labored in Philadelphia until the winter of 1828-1829, having spent nearly a year and a half in the city.

In the spring of 1828 the lumbermen who came down the Delaware River with their rafts heard of the revival in Philadelphia and attended some of the meetings. A number of these men were converted and on their return to the lumber camps told the story of salvation. Although there were no churches or ministers among them, a revival commenced which extended eighty miles along the river. Within two years five thousand persons were converted solely through the instrumen-

tality of the men who had accepted the Gospel in Finney's meetings at Philadelphia.

During the winter of 1828-1829 Finney conducted successful revivals in Reading and Lancaster, Pennsylvania; and in Columbia, New York, as a result of his visit nearly every one in the town was converted. The City of Galesburg, Illinois, was settled by a colony of persons from Columbia, most of whom had been converted in this revival. With Mr. Gale, Finney's former pastor and theological instructor, they went to the prairies of Illinois and there laid the foundations of the town and college.

The following summer while on a visit to his wife's parents in Oneida County, the revivalist was invited by Anson G. Phelps, the philanthropist, to labor in New York. His methods were regarded by most of the ministers of the city with more or less suspicion and not a church would invite him. So Mr. Phelps hired a vacant Presbyterian church on Vandewater Street. Two or three months later a Universalist church in the neighborhood of Niblo's Garden was offered for sale under foreclosure of mortgage, and this building was purchased and fitted up for Finney's use. Here he preached for about fifteen months. Night after night the church was crowded and multitudes were hopefully converted.

During Finney's stay in New York at this time Arthur Tappan, the philanthropist, formed a lifelong attachment for Finney. His brother, Lewis, who lived in Boston, was a Unitarian and a member of Dr. William Ellery Channing's church. Rev. Henry Ware, who had visited western New York, informed Lewis that

Mr. Finney, who had been preaching at Auburn and elsewhere, had announced himself a "brigadier general of Jesus Christ." Of this he had been told by a Unitarian clergyman in Oneida County, who assured him that the story was absolutely true. Not long afterwards when in New York he reported this story to his brother Arthur, who pronounced it a fabrication and said that innumerable fictitious stories were circulated about Mr. Finney by those who were opposed to his preaching and measures.

Having unbounded confidence in Mr. Ware, as a cautious, candid, and truthful man, Lewis said to his brother, "I will wager five hundred dollars that the story is true." Arthur replied: "You know that I am not a betting man, but if you can prove by credible testimony that the reports about Finney are true, I will give you five hundred dollars. I make this offer to lead you to investigate. I want you to know that these stories are utterly unreliable."

Lewis Tappan thereupon wrote to Mr. Ware's informant in Oneida County asking for evidence of the truthfulness of the report, "such evidence as would lead to the conviction of a party in a court of justice," and authorizing him to procure it regardless of expense. Of the outcome Tappan wrote: "He undertook the task with commendable zeal, and prosecuted his inquiries from Albany to Buffalo. It is unnecessary to relate the details of the laborious investigation. Suffice it to say, the only evidence he was able to produce, was a small Universalist newspaper, printed in Buffalo, in which it was charged, on anonymous authority, that Mr. Finney had made the absurd and impious declaration."

As a consequence Lewis Tappan was led to review his whole position, with the result that he was soon converted and changed his views from Unitarianism to orthodoxy. Throughout the remainder of his life he was a devoted friend of Finney.

One of the results of the revival in New York was the Presbyterian Free Church movement. Impressed by "the almost total exclusion of the poor from the Presbyterian and Dutch churches; the great neglect of the careless and impenitent on the part of professing Christians; and the importance of more direct and faithful efforts for their conversion," a small group of men united in the formation of the First Free Presbyterian Church, which should be supported by voluntary contributions, and the seats of which should be free, whence the name, the Free Presbyterian Church. Such was the growth of this church that within two years the Second Free Presbyterian Church was formed. Within five years five such churches had been organized. In February, 1835, Lewis Tappan wrote to the English commissioners who came to study the state of religion in America, "A new church might be organized in this city every year, out of each of the Free churches, *provided suitable ministers could be obtained.*"

In the summer of 1830, while again visiting in Oneida County, Mr. Finney was invited to supply for a time the pulpit of the Third Presbyterian Church at Rochester. He was disinclined at first to accept the invitation. The outlook was most unpromising. The church was in a low state spiritually and a spirit of dissension existed among the Presbyterian churches of the city. At a loss to know just what should be done,

he went to Utica to confer with several of his friends in whose judgment he placed the highest confidence. Their views seemed to coincide with his own, and he had about made up his mind to decline the invitation, but after a more mature deliberation on the matter he was convinced that the reasons for which he was holding back were, after all, the very reasons why he ought to accept the invitation. So, much to the surprise of the friends whom he had consulted, he finally decided to go. A most remarkable revival attended his labors. Upwards of twelve hundred members were received into the churches of the Rochester Presbytery besides great numbers who united with churches of other denominations.

Charles P. Bush, who afterwards became an influential minister in New York, but at that time was a student in the Rochester Academy and had united with the Third Presbyterian Church under Mr. Finney's ministry, wrote:

"The whole community was stirred. Religion was the topic of conversation, in the house, in the shop, in the office, and on the street. . . . The only theatre in the city was converted into a livery stable; the only circus into a soap and candle factory. Grog shops were closed; the sabbath was honored; the sanctuaries were thronged with happy worshippers; a new impulse was given to every philanthropic enterprise; the fountains of benevolence were opened, and men lived to do good.

"And it is worthy of special notice that a large number of the leading men of the place were among the converts—the lawyers, the judges, physicians, merchants, bankers, and master mechanics. These classes

were more moved from the very first than any other. Tall oaks were bowed as by the blast of the hurricane. Skeptics and scoffers were brought in, and a large number of the most promising young men. It is said that no less than forty of them entered the ministry. . . .

"It is not too much to say that the whole character of the city was changed by that revival. Most of the leaders of society being converted, and exerting a controlling influence in social life, in business, and in civil affairs, religion was enthroned as it has been in few places. . . . Even the courts and the prisons bore witness to its blessed effects. There was a wonderful falling off in crime. The courts had little to do, and the jail was nearly empty for years afterward."

The influence of this revival was felt throughout the length and breadth of the land. The great cities especially were moved. It was estimated that more than fifteen hundred towns and cities were blessed with revivals of religion and as many more felt the impulse of the movement. During the first five months fifty thousand were converted, and before the movement had spent its force more than one hundred thousand had been gathered into the churches of the nation.

Underlying this mighty work of grace was a spirit of prevailing prayer, of which Finney wrote: "When I was on my way to Rochester, as we passed through a village, some thirty miles east of Rochester, a brother minister whom I knew, seeing me on the canal-boat, jumped aboard to have a little conversation with me, intending to ride but a little way and return. He, however, became interested in conversation, and upon finding where I was going, he made up his mind to keep

on and go with me to Rochester. We had been there but a few days when this minister became so convicted that he could not help weeping aloud, at one time, as he passed along the street. The Lord gave him a powerful spirit of prayer, and his heart was broken. As he and I prayed much together, I was struck with his faith in regard to what the Lord was going to do there. I recollect he would say, 'Lord, I do not know how it is; but I seem to know that Thou art going to do a great work in this city.' The spirit of prayer was poured out powerfully, so much so, that some persons staid away from the public services to pray, being unable to restrain their feelings under preaching."

Among those who were associated with him in this way in Rochester and at Auburn, where he went immediately afterwards, was Mr. Abel Clary, a ministerial licentiate whom Finney had known intimately from boyhood and who had been converted in the same revival. Like "Father" Nash he was a man mightily given to prayer. Although he was an educated man he did not attempt to preach much and seldom even appeared in public. He was so burdened for the souls of men that he gave almost his entire time and strength to intercession. When Finney would be preaching he would be apart by himself agonizing and praying for an outpouring of the Spirit of God in the salvation of souls.

In 1842 and 1855 Mr. Finney again conducted revivals in the city of Rochester with notable results. In 1842 the invitation came from the lawyers of the city while he was passing through Rochester en route to Oberlin. This invitation he decided to accept. During

the progress of his work the Rev. Jedidiah Burchard, an eccentric evangelist who was popular for some years in New York and New England, also labored in the city, but as entirely different classes were reached by these two men, their efforts proved mutually supplemental and as a consequence the religious interests throughout the city were greatly quickened.

Finney was requested to deliver a series of lectures adapted to the needs of the legal profession. He had been forewarned that many of the lawyers were Deists who, accepting the philosophy of Tom Paine and rejecting the Bible, were merely curious to know what sort of argument a lawyer would put up in behalf of religion. He accordingly took as the subject of his first discourse, Do We Know Anything? For nine consecutive sessions of two hours each he laid down his premises and drew his conclusions from the dictates of common sense and the facts of common experience.

Having shown in this manner the inevitable consequences of the infractions of the Moral Law, he turned to the Bible and the plan of salvation which it revealed, emphasizing its teachings as to the love of God and His fatherly solicitude for sinning men. Then he said: "This is the book which you have removed from your shelves to make room for Tom Paine's shallow 'Age of Reason!' How can you escape if you neglect so great salvation?" A powerful impression was made and the interest deepened from night to night as the lectures progressed.

Among the attendants was Judge Addison Gardner of the New York Court of Appeals who during Finney's first visit to Rochester had strongly opposed the

"anxious seat." As he attended these lectures from night to night Finney cherished the hope that he might be converted. One evening, when he was speaking in a way especially applicable to the Judge, he observed that he had vacated his seat and he supposed that he had gone home; but just as Finney was drawing his address to a close the Judge, who had ascended a narrow stairway from the basement to the back of the pulpit, plucked at the skirt of Finney's coat and said, "Mr. Finney, I wish you would pray for me by name, and I will take the anxious seat."

Nothing had been said by Finney about an anxious seat and when he announced to his audience what the Judge had said, a profound impression was created, and as the Judge knelt in front of the pulpit the lawyers present, rising up almost *en masse* and filling the aisles and vacant space about the pulpit, expressed a desire to consecrate their lives to the service of Jesus Christ.

Large numbers of the better class of citizens were reached by this revival. The churches of the various religious denominations shared in its fruits. Dr. Whitehouse, afterwards Bishop of Illinois, was rector of Saint Luke's Episcopal Church in Rochester at that time. Seventy of the prominent members of his church were confirmed, nearly all of whom had been converted in Finney's meetings. All told, about a thousand conversions were reported throughout the city.

In the autumn of 1855 Mr. Finney was invited for the third time to labor in Rochester. At first he was disinclined to accept the invitation, but finally was prevailed upon to attempt another season of revival effort in that city. He continued his labors for a period

of three months and was warmly supported by pastors of the Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist churches. The influence of the revival became all-pervasive. A considerable number of students in the University of Rochester were converted, and by special request Mr. Finney delivered a series of lectures to lawyers on The Moral Government of God, as a result of which a number of leading attorneys were influenced to embrace religion.

Of this revival Professor William Cleaver Wilkinson, who at that time was a student in the University of Rochester, wrote: "The interest was extraordinary. The city was taken possession of. Scarcely anything else was talked about. The atmosphere was full of a kind of electricity of spiritual power. The daily papers all reported the meetings at great length. The railroads at one time, I remember, were obstructed by a snow-storm, which detained large numbers of passengers temporarily in the city. A large proportion of these were attracted into the meetings. The result was that a great many, during this brief interval, were converted. People accosted each other on the street, and began an exchange of question and reply on the subject of personal religion, as naturally and easily almost as in time of commercial distress they would talk of the financial condition of the country; or to use an apter illustration, as in a time of epidemic disease they would talk of their own health and that of their families and friends."

The influence of this revival, as in the two preceding ones, was far reaching. Merchants arranged to have their clerks attend. Many of the railroad men of the

city became deeply interested in the services, and much of the Sunday business of the roads was suspended so the men could attend to the salvation of their souls. The ladies of the city did their utmost to bring all classes to the meetings and to Christ. Some of them visited stores and business places to secure the attendance at the meetings of those engaged there. One thousand persons were led to unite with the churches in the city of Rochester, while the influence of the work extended to the towns and cities in the outlying districts.

Mr. Finney always had a high regard for the city of Rochester. It is said that in his old age nothing seemed to rouse him more than mention of that city. He would inquire after his spiritual children there, the converts of his various revivals, and would ask whether they were true to their earlier professions and if they still were laboring in the vineyard of the Lord. Then he would go over some of the scenes and incidents of those early days, relating with great minuteness and accuracy how one and another wrestled against his convictions and how finally they were subdued by divine grace. He wrote of his revivals there:

"What was quite remarkable in the three revivals that I have witnessed in Rochester, they all commenced and made their first progress among the higher classes of society. This was very favorable to the general spread of the work, and to the overcoming of opposition.

"I never preached anywhere with more pleasure than in Rochester. They are a highly intelligent people, and have ever manifested a candor, an earnestness, and

an appreciation of the truth excelling anything I have seen, on so large a scale, in any other place. I have labored in other cities where the people were more highly educated than in Rochester. But in those cities the views and habits of the people were more stereotyped; the people were more fastidious, more afraid of measures than in Rochester. In New England I have found a high degree of general education, but a timidity, a stiffness, a formality, and a stereotyped way of doing things, that has rendered it impossible for the Holy Spirit to work with freedom and power."

In 1831, following the first Rochester revival, Finney conducted a second series of meetings at Auburn, described in a previous chapter. Towards the close of his labors in this city he was visited by a messenger from Buffalo who brought an urgent request to conduct a revival in that city, for which the way had been prepared through the influence of his labors in Rochester. He spent about a month in Buffalo, where a large number of accessions to the churches was reported. From Buffalo he went to Providence, Rhode Island, remaining three weeks, and although there were many conversions, because of the brevity of his stay his labors were not so fruitful as in some of the places which he had previously visited.

While the revival at Providence was in progress Dr. Wisner, pastor of the Old South Church in Boston, visited the city "to spy out the land and bring back a report." He did not make himself known until he had heard three sermons. Then he went to Finney and said, "I came here as a heresy hunter; but here is my hand, and my heart is with you." When he returned

home he met the pastors and turning to Dr. Beecher he said: "When Dr. Beecher preaches, he has prepared himself, and makes a profound impression; but what the next blow will be we cannot tell. Mr. Finney strikes home, and repeats the blow on the same spot, only harder, until the driven wedge splits the log, and there is no help for it."

An invitation was extended to Finney from the Congregational churches and ministers of the city to conduct a revival in Boston. He was not disposed at first to accept it because, four years previously at the New Lebanon convention, Dr. Lyman Beecher, the leading pastor in the city, had said: "Finney I know your plan, and you know I do; you mean to come to Connecticut and carry a streak of fire to Boston. But if you attempt it, as the Lord liveth, I'll meet you at the State line, and call out all the artillery-men, and fight every inch of the way to Boston, and then I'll fight you there."

After Finney was invited to Boston he chanced to meet Beecher's youngest daughter, Miss Catherine, and to her he confided, "At the New Lebanon Convention your father solemnly vowed to fight me if I came to Boston, and I cannot go unless he asks me." "So," said Beecher in his *Memoirs,* "we wrote and invited him, and he came in August, 1831, and did very well."

Finney conducted four subsequent revivals in Boston. In 1841-1842 the city was visited with a very remarkable religious awakening known as "the Great Boston Revival." Charles G. Finney, Elder Jacob Knapp, the well known Baptist revivalist, and Edward N. Kirk successively conducted revival services in the

city. It was estimated that more than four thousand members were added to the churches of the various denominations in Boston. Mr. Finney, however, did not take a very active part in this work, because, by reason of ill health, he was unable to preach a great deal.

At this time Millerism was at its height in various parts of the country, and Captain Miller was in Boston, confidently affirming that the second advent of our Saviour would take place April 23, 1843. At that time, he declared, Christ would destroy His enemies. He gave an exposition of the prophecy of Daniel on the subject, declaring that the stone which was cut out of the mountain and destroyed the image there spoken of was Christ. With his usual open-mindedness Mr. Finney attended some of Miller's Bible classes and frankly invited him to his room, stating that the prophet did not teach that the stone was Christ, but the Kingdom of God, and that it was the church, or the Kingdom of God, which should destroy the image. Captain Miller agreed that it was the church, or Kingdom of God, and not Christ, which was to destroy those nations. Finney then endeavored to convince him that the kingdoms of the world would be overthrown by the church through the preaching of the Gospel. But Miller was so obsessed with the idea of Christ's speedy coming that it was useless to attempt to reason with him.

William Ellery Channing, the great Unitarian divine, died during Finney's second revival in Boston. He had expressed a desire to see Finney but circumstances forbade. It seems that a Unitarian woman of his acquaintance had been converted in Finney's meetings. Dr. Channing was too feeble to leave his home, so he re-

quested her to visit him and tell him of her change in views. She complied with his request and he seemed to be very much interested. He asked if she had any of Finney's publications that he could read. She loaned him the former's *Views of Sanctification,* which had just been published. A week later she returned, when Channing said: "I am very much interested in this book, and in the views that are here set forth. I understand that the orthodox object to this view of sanctification, as it is presented by Mr. Finney; but I cannot see, if Christ is divine and truly God, why this view should be objected to; nor can I see any inconsistency, in holding this as a part of the orthodox faith. Yet I should like to see Mr. Finney. Cannot you persuade him to call on me? for I cannot go to see him." Before a meeting could be arranged, however, Channing left the city for Rutland, Vermont, where he died.

In 1843 Finney was again in Boston laboring at the Marlboro Chapel, or the First Free Congregational Church as it was called. Dissensions in the church interfered with any extensive awakening at this time and his efforts were confined chiefly to Christian people.

During the winter of 1856-1857 Mr. Finney spent several months in Boston, laboring principally at the Park Street and Shawmut Congregational churches. *The Congregationalist* said that "never within the memory of man have there been in Boston so many cheerful tokens of the universal presence of the Holy Spirit." *The Oberlin Evangelist* reported that when Finney "commenced his labors in Boston, the tone of religious feeling was very low. But the Lord's blessing came in answer to prayer and patience; and now the results

are every way cheering. Many of the most important places near Boston have felt this reviving and refreshing influence. Ipswich, Andover, Lawrence, and Lowell, we learn from private sources, are among this number."

The following winter President and Mrs. Finney were again in Boston.* Of the several revivals which he conducted in the city, none was more fruitful in good results than this one, which was conducted during the Great Revival which swept over the country in 1857-1858.

The great national revival of 1857-1858 originated at the old North Dutch Church, Fulton Street, New York. For some years the church had been declining in numbers through the removal of members on account of the encroachment of business upon that section of the city. In order to stem the tide and if possible to reach the unchurched masses which had gathered about it, Mr. Jeremiah Lanphere was employed as a lay missionary. While a measure of success attended his labors, he met with various difficulties, in the midst of which he found help and comfort in prayer.

It occurred to him that a prayer meeting at a suitable hour might be of service to the business men of the city. A noon prayer meeting was accordingly appointed for Wednesday, September 23, 1857, in a room on the third floor of the Consistory building of the church. Only six persons attended this meeting. The week following twenty were present, and at the third meeting this num-

*During one of the revivals conducted by Finney in Boston a gentleman called one day on business. The evangelist's small daughter answered the door bell. "Is your father in?" inquired the visitor. "No," was the startling reply, "but come in, poor dying sinner, and mother will pray for you."

ber had doubled. It was then decided to hold the noon prayer meeting daily. Little by little the attendance and interest increased until the rooms on all three floors of the Consistory building were in use for simultaneous meetings. The influence of this work extended throughout New York and Brooklyn, until by spring in New York alone there were more than twenty places where daily prayer meetings were conducted.

From New York the work extended to other cities, to Philadelphia, Albany, Boston, Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, St. Louis, and elsewhere, until there was scarcely a city or hamlet throughout the Northern States that was not affected by the revival. The daily papers of the great cities devoted much space to the reports of this remarkable religious awakening, and for a time casualties, crime, and other secular matters were overshadowed by the religious interest. Within a year's time it was estimated that more than half a million persons had been converted.

While for a time there were daily preaching services at Burton's Theatre in New York, and in Boston where Finney was laboring, for the most part the revival was carried on by the daily union prayer meetings which as a general thing were conducted by laymen. Speaking of this phase of the revival Finney said:

"There was such a general confidence in the prevalence of prayer, that the people very extensively seemed to prefer meetings for prayer to meetings for preaching. The general impression seemed to be 'We have had instruction until we are hardened; it is time for us to pray.' The answers to prayer were constant, and so striking as to arrest the attention of the people

generally throughout the land. It was evident that in answer to prayer the windows of heaven were opened and the Spirit of God poured out like a flood."

During the progress of this revival Finney preached in Boston, Charlestown, Chelsea, and East Boston. Noon prayer meetings were instituted in the Old South Church, which attracted such multitudes that many could not get in, and at the Park Street Church, which was the principal scene of Finney's labors. In the spacious vestry of Park Street Church Mrs. Finney conducted meetings for women. These meetings were so largely attended that the women would fill the room, and then stand about the door on the outside as far as voices could be heard. The various meetings were attended by large numbers, both of orthodox people and Unitarians, with the result that many were converted.

There was much opposition to the revival in Boston. In his addresses at Music Hall Theodore Parker hurled ridicule upon the meetings and denounced the "God of the Park Street theology." In one address he said: "Just now there is a revival of religion, so called, going on in the land. The newspapers are full of it. Crowds of men and women throng the meeting-houses. They cannot get preaching enough. The poorer the article, the more they want of it. . . . The newspapers tell us fifty thousands are converted in a week. That is a great story, but it may be true. The revival may spread all over the land. It will make church members—not good husbands, good wives, daughters, uncles, aunts; not good shoemakers, farmers, lawyers, mechanics, merchants, laborers. . . . Suppose you could convert all the merchants, all the mechanics, all the laborers of Boston,

and admit them to the churches that are getting up this revival, you would not add one ounce to the virtue of the city, not one cent's work of charity to the whole town. You weaken its intelligence, its enterprise; you deaden the piety and morality of the people. . . . The churches need a revival. No institution in America is more corrupt than her churches. No thirty thousand men and women are so bigoted and narrow as the thirty thousand ministers."

The friends of the revival were deeply disturbed and distressed by Parker's attacks. It was observed that many who had been almost persuaded to become Christians were intimidated and kept back through his antagonistic utterances. Such was Finney's confidence in the persuasive power of truth that he thought a brief conference would correct Parker's theological errors. So he made repeated calls at the residence of Mr. Parker, and although the latter was at home at the time, he refused to see the evangelist. Finally a special day of prayer was appointed in the vestry of the Park Street Church that God might either convert Theodore Parker or in some way counteract his pernicious influence. Not long afterwards he obtained a leave of absence and went to Europe in quest of his health. He never returned, but died in Florence, Italy.

While there were notable results in each of the revivals which Finney conducted in Boston, on the whole they were neither so remarkable nor so wide-reaching in their influence as his labors elsewhere. The type of religion which he found prevalent in Boston impressed him as peculiar and he wrote:

"The mass of people in Boston were more unsettled

in their religious convictions than in any other place I have ever labored in, notwithstanding their intelligence; for they are surely a very intelligent people on every other subject but that of religion. It is extremely difficult to make religious truths lodge in their minds because the influence of Unitarian teaching has been to lead them to call in question all the principal doctrines of the Bible. Their system is one of denials. Their theology is negative. They deny almost everything, and affirm almost nothing. In such a field error finds the ears of the people open, and the most irrational views on religious subjects come to be held by a great many people."

Chapter VII

Pastorate in New York

The origin of the Presbyterian Free Church movement has been mentioned in a previous chapter. Early in 1832 Mr. Finney was invited to New York City by individuals belonging to the First and Second Free Presbyterian churches, it being the intention to organize a third church. After more mature consideration it was decided to relinquish that plan for the time being and enlarge the scope of the Second Church under Finney's pastoral supervision.

For nearly ten years Charles G. Finney had labored incessantly as an evangelist, with but brief seasons for rest during the entire period. He now had three children and found it practically impossible to take them with him about the country. His health, moreover, had become seriously impaired by reason of his arduous labors. Not only for these reasons, but because of the opportunities for service and usefulness thus afforded, was a pastorate in a great city like New York desirable. He accordingly accepted the call now extended to him and entered upon his duties in the city.

After experiencing some difficulty in securing a suitable place for him to labor, Lewis and Arthur Tappan,

David Hale, and others leased the Chatham Street Theatre, which heretofore had been a haunt of obscenity, intemperance, and vice. The last week in April, 1832, two gentlemen approached Mr. Blanchard, the lessee, and asked him if he would sell his lease. "What for?" he bluntly asked. "For a church." "A w-h-a-t?" "A church, sir." With open eyes and mouth he exclaimed, "You mean to make a c-h-u-r-c-h here!" Upon being assured that this was their purpose, he burst into tears and said, "You may have it and I will contribute a thousand dollars towards it."

The arrangement was completed and at the close of the morning rehearsal, the hymn, The Voice of Free Grace, was sung, after which Mr. Arthur Tappan announced to the actors that the scenery would be removed, a pulpit placed on the stage, and an "anxious seat" arranged at the footlights; that on the following Sunday and each evening thereafter preaching services would be conducted in the Theatre, to which all were invited. The next morning a prayer meeting was held at half-past five o'clock, some eight hundred persons being present. Prayers were offered by Rev. Herman Norton, secretary of the Foreign Evangelical Society, Zechariah Lewis, Esq., one of the first editors of the *New York Commercial Advertiser,* John Wheelwright, and Rev. John Woodbridge who also delivered a brief address and pronounced the benediction.

At an expense of nearly seven thousand dollars the theatre was refitted as a church auditorium, with lecture and Sunday School rooms adjoining, and at half-past ten Sunday morning, May 6, the building was dedicated as Chatham Street Chapel, Mr. Finney

preaching from the text, "Who is on the Lord's side?" In the afternoon the Lord's Supper was administered, and at the evening service the place was too strait for them, hundreds of people being turned away. Mr. Finney took as his text: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live." An attempt was made to interrupt the meeting that night, but police quelled the disturbance. For seventy successive evenings Finney preached to audiences ranging from 1500 to 2500 persons.

The work in the Chatham Street Theatre having been launched with every promise of success, on September 28, 1832, Finney was installed as pastor by a commission appointed by the Third Presbytery of New York, a branch of the First Presbytery. The installation sermon was preached by Rev. Joel Parker from the text, "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it; except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."

In addition to the preaching services at the Chatham Street Chapel; Bible classes were formed; prayer meetings instituted; Bibles and religious literature circulated; shops, stores, saloons, and offices visited, and their frequenters invited to attend the services. The barroom of the theatre was transformed into a prayer room, and it is a fact worthy of record that the first man to kneel there offered this petition: "O Lord, forgive my sins! The last time I was here Thou knowest that I was a wicked actor on this stage. O Lord, have mercy on me!"

Three large rooms connected with the front part of the theatre were fitted up for prayer meetings and as a lecture room. These rooms were connected one above the other with the three tiers of galleries with which the theatre was equipped. This made an exceedingly convenient arrangement for carrying on the work of evangelism. Said Finney:

"I instructed my church-members to scatter themselves over the whole house, and to keep their eyes open, in regard to any that were seriously affected under preaching, and if possible detain them after preaching for conversation and prayer. They were true to their teaching, and were on the lookout at every meeting to see with whom the word of God was taking effect; and they had faith enough to dismiss their fears, and to speak to any whom they saw to be affected by the word. In this way the conversion of a great many souls was secured."

The summer after the commencement of his labors in New York, the city was visited with a scourge of cholera. On one occasion, from the door of his house, Finney counted five hearses drawn up at different doors within sight. Not willing to leave his people while the mortality was so great he remained in the city all summer. Finally in the fall he fell a victim himself, and such were the drastic means used for his recovery that his system received a severe shock and he was ill a long time. By spring, however, he was able to preach again. Not long afterwards he inaugurated a revival campaign, preaching nightly for twenty evenings, during which some five hundred persons were converted. The membership now became so large that a colony

was sent out to form another church for which a suitable structure was erected on Madison and Catherine Streets.

The Chatham Street Chapel continued to be a scene of revivalistic inspiration and work. Meetings of inquiry were held once or twice a week and sometimes oftener. A goodly number of conversions was reported every week. Of the character of the membership Finney wrote:

"The church were a praying, working people. They were thoroughly united, were well-trained in regard to labors for the conversion of sinners, and were a most devoted and efficient church of Christ. They would go out into the high-ways and hedges and bring people to hear preaching, whenever they were called upon to do so. Both men and women would undertake this work. When we wished to give notice of extra meetings, little slips of paper, on which was printed an invitation to attend the services, would be carried from house to house in every direction, by the members of the church, especially in that part of the city in which Chatham Street Chapel, as we called it, was located. By the distribution of these slips, and by oral invitations, the house could be filled, any evening in the week. Our ladies were not afraid to go out and gather in all classes, from the neighborhood round about.

"When I first went to Chatham Street Chapel, I informed the brethren that I did not wish to fill up the house with Christians from other churches, as my object was to gather from the world. I wanted to secure the conversion of the ungodly, to the utmost possible extent. We therefore gave ourselves to labor for that

class of persons, and by the blessing of God, with good success. Conversions were multiplied so much that our church soon would become so large that we would send off a colony; and when I left New York, I think, we had seven free churches, whose members were laboring with all their might to secure the salvation of souls. They were supported mostly by collections, that were taken up from Sabbath to Sabbath. If at any time there was a deficiency in the treasury, there were a number of brethren of property, who would at once supply the deficiency from their own purses; so that we never had the least difficulty in meeting the pecuniary demands.

"A more harmonious, prayerful, and efficient people, I never knew, than were the members of those free churches. They were not among the rich, although there were several men of property belonging to them. In general they were gathered from the middle and lower classes of people. This was what we aimed to accomplish, to preach the Gospel especially to the poor."

Becoming dissatisfied about this time with the difficulty of administering discipline through the centralized polity of Presbyterianism, Mr. Finney and his friends organized a Congregational Church. As a matter of fact Finney had been a Presbyterian largely by accident. From the hyper-Calvinism then prevalent in Presbyterian circles, its practical denial of human freedom, its doctrine of an atonement for the elect only, and its idea of physical regeneration, he had recoiled before and after his conversion. The churches which he had served as a home missionary pastor both at

Evans Mills and Antwerp were Congregational. From that time to his acceptance of the pastorate of the Chatham Street Chapel, he had labored as an evangelist and so he had had little opportunity to observe the practical workings of Presbyterian church government. After assuming his pastoral duties in New York he discovered that he was as little of a Presbyterian in church administration as he had been doctrinally.

So far as his theological views were concerned, they probably were no more welcome in Congregational circles than they had been among the Presbyterians, and it is doubtful whether his taking up with the Congregational form of church government was regarded as an asset to that denomination, for theologically, during practically the whole of his life, he was looked upon with suspicion by the Congregationalists. It was solely upon the grounds of church administration that Finney decided to make this change in his ecclesiastical relations. For the further continuance of his labors in New York, the Broadway Tabernacle was organized. Aside from some slight changes in its organization, under its succession of able and distinguished pastors Broadway Tabernacle has continued to be a center of Christian usefulness. During the antislavery agitation it exerted a nation-wide influence.

Among the various obstacles which Mr. Finney had encountered in his work were ill-constructed audience rooms, which, while ornate and artistic, were in no wise adapted to the purposes of public speaking. So when Broadway Tabernacle was erected he insisted that it should conform to his own ideas. He said:

"The plan of the interior of that house was my own.

I had observed the defects of churches in regard to sound, and was sure that I could give the plan of a church in which I could easily speak to a much larger congregation than any house would hold that I had ever seen. An architect was consulted, and I gave him my plan. But he objected to it, that it would not appear well, and feared that it would injure his reputation to build a church with such an interior as that. I told him that if he would not build it on that plan, he was not the man to superintend its construction at all. It was finally built in accordance with my ideas; and it was a most commodious place to speak in."

The building as planned by Mr. Finney, who cared more for acoustics than aesthetics, was one hundred feet square, with plain brick walls and was located fifty feet from Broadway in the center of a built-up block, so that no expense should be incurred for outside adornment. Erected at an expense of sixty-six thousand five hundred dollars, the seats in the auditorium were arranged in the form of a circle, into which extended a spacious square platform about a fourth of the distance from the rear wall. All around was a deep gallery, so that the entire audience was seated about the preacher. The tabernacle had sittings for twenty-five hundred persons and could accommodate fifteen hundred more.

It was the most perfect auditorium in New York at that time, every listener being within eighty feet of the speaker, enabling him to speak with perfect ease and every listener to hear without difficulty. Under the choir loft at the rear of the platform were arranged the pastor's study and a large lecture room which could

be used in giving instruction to young men who were preparing for the ministry. In that auditorium not only was heard the voice of Finney, but Wendell Phillips, William Lloyd Garrison, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Lucy Stone, Fred Douglass, Louis Kossuth, and other notables also spoke from its platform, so that it has been said, "What Faneuil Hall was to Boston, the old Tabernacle was to New York."

In 1834 Mr. Finney made a trip to the Mediterranean for the recovery of his health. The trip was made on a small brig, the captain of which was given to the excessive use of stimulants. On one occasion during a storm at sea he was so intoxicated that Finney was obliged to assume command of the vessel. His knowledge of navigation, which he had acquired as a boy when living at Henderson's Harbor on Lake Ontario, stood him well in hand, and taking charge of the brig he discharged his duties to the satisfaction of all on board. Six months later, having spent some weeks in Malta and Sicily, he returned to New York. Almost immediately on the resumption of his labors at Broadway Tabernacle, a great revival began which continued throughout the remainder of his pastorate in the city. Shortly after his return to New York he delivered his celebrated *Lectures on Revivals of Religion,* which were first published in the *New York Evangelist,* a periodical which had been established to promote the revivals in which he was engaged.

The establishment of the *Evangelist* was brought about on this wise. The *New York Observer,* which had given currency to the criticisms which Nettleton and others had made against Finney, refused to publish

anything in his favor. Judge Jonas Platt of the New York Supreme Court, who with his son and daughter had been converted in the revival which Finney had conducted in Utica, one day found pasted on the inside cover of one of his law books a letter which had been written by a New York pastor against Whitefield. Judge Platt sent it to Mr. Morse of the *Observer* requesting him to publish it merely as a literary curiosity. But the latter refused on the ground that its publication might give the impression that the opponents of Finney were manifesting the same spirit of opposition which formerly had greeted Whitefield. The friends of Finney, therefore, decided to project a new paper which should be favorable to the revivals identified with his name.

The first issue of the *Evangelist* appeared March 6, 1830, Mr. Finney assisting in its preparation. The paper soon succeeded in acquiring a considerable circulation, especially after two or three years, when the Rev. Joshua Leavitt assumed the editorial chair.

Mr. Leavitt was an ardent advocate of the antislavery reform. Mr. Finney also adhered to antislavery principles, but he did not hold radical or extreme views upon the subject. On the eve of his departure to the Mediterranean he cautioned Leavitt against being too radical in the expression of his views, lest he should destroy the influence of the paper. This caution, however, was unheeded, and on Finney's return Leavitt went to him and said: "I have ruined the *Evangelist*. I have not been as prudent as you cautioned me to be, and I have gone so far ahead of public intelligence and

feeling on the subject, that my subscription list is rapidly falling; and we shall not be able to continue its publication beyond the first of January, unless you can do something to bring back the paper to public favor again."

After deliberating over the matter a day or two, Finney proposed to deliver to his people a course of lectures on revivals of religion which Leavitt might report for his paper. The proposal met with the latter's enthusiastic approbation. These lectures were delivered extemporaneously. Mr. Leavitt could not write shorthand, but he took down abridged notes in longhand which he afterwards expanded and submitted to Mr. Finney for correction before publication. These printed lectures had the desired effect in building up the circulation of the *Evangelist*. Almost like magic the subscriptions began pouring in, and in a little time the paper had regained its former influence.

These lectures were published afterwards in book form, twelve thousand copies of the first American edition being sold as rapidly as they could be issued from the press. The book was reprinted in England, France, and Wales. One London publisher alone issued eighty thousand copies. Finney's *Revival Lectures* promoted revivals not only in England, Scotland, and Wales, but in many places on the Continent. The reading of these *Lectures* through the columns of the New York *Evangelist* resulted in multitudes of conversions all over our own country. This book contains in detail the philosophy of Finney's methods in promoting revivals and has remained to this day the great classic

upon the subject.* "A brief selection from its pages, scattered almost broadcast in the Far East, led to the Manchurian revival in 1910." A new English edition was published in 1910, with an introduction and annotations by William H. Harding.

In his introduction Mr. Harding says: "These Lectures have owed nothing to richness of mechanical production, but have made their way—perhaps among the rank and file of evangelistic forces, rather than in the seats of learning and power—by sheer merit. Finney, however, has come into his own. The demand for his lectures, after a lapse of three-quarters of a century, is a sufficient answer to criticism, although not many decades since to have mentioned the book as a Christian classic would have provoked a sneer such as Cowper anticipated if, in verse, he should mention the name of John Bunyan."

During his pastorate in New York numerous applications had come to Finney from young men, requesting him to take them as students in theology. But his hands were too full to attempt anything of the sort. When the Broadway Tabernacle was erected, a room was provided under the choir loft which could be used

*Speaking, in one of his addresses, of the time when he was an apprentice lad of fifteen or sixteen, Gen. William Booth said, "How I can remember rushing along the streets during my forty minutes' dinner time, reading the Bible or C. G. Finney's *Lectures on Revivals of Religion* as I went, careful, too, not to be a minute late." Speaking of Gen. Booth's sermon making, his official biographer, Commissioner G. S. Railton wrote: "He took the best models he could find—men like John Wesley, George Whitefield, and, above all, C. G. Finney, who he could be certain had never sought in their preaching for human applause, but for the glory of God and the good of souls alone." But for the influence of Charles G. Finney, the mighty work of the Salvation Army might never have been.

for prayer meetings, but more particularly for a theological lecture room. Finney had resolved to give each year a course of theological lectures, which might be attended gratuitously by theological students. Before he could carry his resolution into effect events transpired which were destined to alter the entire current of his life.

In 1833 Rev. John J. Shipherd, a young Presbyterian minister, and Rev. Philo P. Stewart, who had been a missionary under the American Board to the Choctaw Indians in Mississippi, founded a colony and an educational institute in Lorain County, Ohio, upon a tract of land which had been donated for the purpose. The new community was named in honor of John Frederick Oberlin, the eminent evangelical pastor of Alsace, in the Vosges Mountains, the story of whose self-sacrificing life had just reached America. The colonists, all of New England birth or ancestry, came with high resolves and lofty moral purposes, pledging themselves to self-denying efforts in the support of the school and the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom. The Collegiate Institute, which was the first in America to offer equal advantages to women, opened its doors in December, 1833, with two instructors and thirty-four students. The total attendance during this introductory term reached forty-four, twenty-nine men and fifteen women.

It was the ultimate intention of the founders of the school to establish a department of theology, but this came about sooner than was anticipated and in a very surprising manner. In 1834 the trustees of Lane Theological Seminary, in Cincinnati, becoming alarmed

at the growth of antislavery views among the students, passed a rule prohibiting them from discussing the slavery question in public or private. Four-fifths of the students thereupon withdrew and for a time attempted to instruct themselves. Learning of this state of affairs, Mr. Arthur Tappan, of New York, offering to pay all of the expenses of the undertaking, proposed to Mr. Finney that he go to some point in Ohio, and prepare these young men for the work of the ministry in the West.

In the meantime Mr. Shipherd, who was going East to secure funds and a president for Oberlin, after fasting and prayer was impressed that he must go by way of Cincinnati. He could not account for this impression and at first was disposed to regard it as unreasonable. He had no acquaintances in Cincinnati and there was no special reason, as he thought, why he should not go directly eastward, but so strong was the impression that he could not set it aside, and so finally he decided to go East in that roundabout way.

On his arrival in Cincinnati he learned for the first time what had transpired at Lane Seminary. He succeeded in persuading Rev. Asa Mahan, pastor of the Sixth Street Presbyterian Church and a dissenting member of the trustees of Lane Seminary, to accept the presidency of Oberlin. The students agreed to go there also, provided Charles G. Finney could be secured as professor of theology.

In the pursuit of this object Messrs. Shipherd and Mahan proceeded to New York to confer with Mr. Finney. Mr. Mahan, of course, had never been at Oberlin, and although Mr. Shipherd had secured for

the school a charter adapted to the aims of a university, all that could be reported from Oberlin was that "the trees had been removed from the college square, some dwelling houses and one college building erected, and about a hundred pupils had been gathered in the preparatory and academic departments of the institution." From many standpoints the proposition which was laid before Finney was far from attractive. The proposal of the Lane students, however, to go to Oberlin carried weight.

"This proposal," wrote Finney, "met with the views of Arthur and Lewis Tappan, and many of the friends of the slave who sympathized with Mr. Tappan in his wish to have these young men instructed and brought into the ministry. We had several consultations on the subject. The brethren in New York who were interested in the question offered, if I would go and spend half of each year at Oberlin, to endow the Institution so far as the professorships were concerned, and to do it immediately.

"In view of the condition at Lane Seminary I said to Mr. Shipherd that I would not go at any rate, unless two points were conceded by the trustees. One was that they should never interfere with the internal regulation of the school, but should leave that entirely to the discretion of the faculty. The other was that we should be allowed to receive colored people on the same condition as we did white people; that there should be no discrimination made on account of color.

"When these conditions were forwarded to Oberlin, the trustees were called together, and after a great struggle to overcome their own prejudices, and the

prejudices of the community, they passed the resolutions complying with the conditions proposed. This difficulty being removed, the friends in New York were called together, to see what they could do about endowing the institution. In the course of an hour or two, they had a subscription filled for the endowment of eight professorships; as many, it was supposed, as the institution would need for several years."

Even after this endowment was subscribed Finney said: "I felt great difficulty in giving up that admirable place for preaching the gospel, where such crowds were gathered within the sound of my voice. I felt, too, assured that in this new enterprise, we should have great opposition from many sources. I therefore told Arthur Tappan that my mind did not feel at rest upon the subject; that we should meet with great opposition because of our anti-slavery principles; and that we could expect to get but very scanty funds to put up our buildings, and procure all the requisite apparatus of a college; that therefore I did not see my way clear, after all, to commit myself unless something could be done that should guarantee us the funds that were indispensable.

"Arthur Tappan's heart was as large as all New York, and I might say, as large as the world. When I laid the case before him, he said, 'Brother Finney, my own income averages about a hundred thousand dollars a year. Now if you will go to Oberlin, take hold of the work and go on, and see that buildings are put up, and a library and everything provided, I will pledge you my entire income except what I need to provide for my family, till you are beyond pecuniary want.' Having

perfect confidence in Brother Tappan I said 'That will do. Thus far the difficulties are out of the way.'

"But still there was a great difficulty in leaving my church in New York. I had never thought of having my labors at Oberlin interfere with my revival labors and preaching. It was therefore agreed between myself and the church, that I should spend my winters in New York, and my summers at Oberlin; and that the church would be at the expense of my going and coming. When this was arranged, I took my family, and arrived in Oberlin at the beginning of the summer, 1835."

Chapter VIII

A School in the Wilderness

At his conversion Finney renounced the prospects of a brilliant legal career in order to preach the Gospel, and now at the very zenith of his power as a preacher and evangelist he accepted the position of professor of theology at Oberlin.

It may seem strange that, with his great and truly remarkable abilities, he should ever have consented to become a teacher in an institution, which as yet was in its experimental stage, in the woods and wilds of northern Ohio. The attitude of the average minister towards such a proposition may be surmised from that of Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler, who was asked to become his successor in the pastorate of the First Church at Oberlin. Finney wrote to him, saying:

"I think that there is no more important field of ministerial labor in the world. I know that you have a great congregation in Brooklyn and are mightily prospered in your labors, but your flock does not contain a *thousand students* pursuing the higher branches of education from year to year. Surely your field is not more important than mine was at the Broadway Tabernacle in New York, nor can your people be more attached to you than mine were to me."

Although the invitation came as a great surprise to Dr. Cuyler, he refused even to consider it, saying that the "kind overture was promptly declined."

Oberlin could offer no such inducements to Finney as were held out to Dr. Cuyler. Instead of a thousand students, the institution at that time had but one hundred. All around was an unbroken forest. When Finney came on the ground the first living thing that he saw was a hedgehog. "He was a symbol of the state of feeling that for some time prevailed in the country towards Oberlin." As he took a defiant attitude, erecting his quills in every direction, Finney seized a club and killed him. The deer were so plentiful in the vicinity, that to escape from the pressure upon his mind, Finney frequently would take his rifle and go into the woods. He seldom went more than forty rods from the clearing without seeing a deer.

So far as the Collegiate Institute and its environment at Oberlin were concerned, there was little that would appeal to the pastor of a great metropolitan church. However, Finney's health had become so impaired that he could no longer give himself continuously to revival labors, and an open door of usefulness seemed to have been set before him at Oberlin. Moreover it is doubtful whether he could have gone to any other place where his influence would have been so wide reaching as it was in the institution to whose interests the next forty years of his life were to be devoted.

Writing of the coming of the Lane "rebels" in 1835, President James H. Fairchild said: "President Mahan came to Oberlin about the first of May, followed a month later by his family and a large number of the

students from Lane. For the president's family, the first log house erected here was vacated and made ready, and this house they occupied several months, until the 'President's House,' at the southwest corner of the square, could be built. For the students who came from Lane, special provision was made. A building was extemporized, called 'Cincinnati Hall.' It was one story high, one hundred and forty-four feet long, and twenty-four feet wide. Its sides and partitions and ceilings and floors were of beech boards fresh from the mill. On the outside it was battened with 'slabs' retaining the bark of the original tree, which gave the building a decidedly rustic aspect. One end of the 'Hall' was fitted up as a kitchen and dining-room, and the remainder was divided into rooms twelve feet square, with a single window to each, and a door opening out upon the forest. Two students were assigned to each room. Oberlin strained a point to give the newcomers a reception and accommodations worthy of their fame. The enthusiasm of the new enterprise lightened hardships and made the rough places smooth. All were satisfied. The number of students that came was about thirty—not all theological students. Several were from the literary course at Lane, in preparation for theology, and entered a similar course here. A few of those who had been most prominent in the movement at Lane, as Theodore D. Weld and Henry B. Stanton, did not come to Oberlin to remain, but were drawn at once into public anti-slavery labors in the country, and only dropped in at Oberlin from time to time as their work permitted."

Professor Finney came to Oberlin in June. As has

already been intimated, he had no thought at that time of devoting his entire attention to the work of teaching. The long vacation at Oberlin had been placed in the winter instead of summer to enable the students to find employment as teachers when such services were in demand. This gave Finney some three months in which to continue the duties of his New York pastorate. Moreover the trustees at the time of his appointment had taken this action: "Resolved, that with the view of the increased influence of Mr. Finney in the church at large, he have liberty to be absent four or five months of each year, when, on consulting with the Faculty, and with them making the arrangement so as to secure the best interests of the institution, he shall deem it to be his duty."

For two seasons he returned to New York, but owing to the state of his health he found it impracticable to continue the arrangement, and on April 6, 1837, he was dismissed by advice of the New York Association from the pastorate of the Broadway Tabernacle. Thereafter he devoted two months of the long vacation, so far as his health would permit, to evangelistic labors.

At the organization of the Oberlin church, Rev. James J. Shipherd was called to the pastorate. This position he filled until his resignation, on account of ill health, in 1836. Mr. Finney was asked to take "temporary charge" of the church. This relationship was finally made permanent and Mr. Finney continued the pastorate of the church, in connection with his college duties, until 1872. During a considerable por-

tion of this time Professor Morgan was associated with him as assistant pastor.

For some years preaching services were held in Colonial Hall, which was completed in the spring of 1836, but within a very few years the place had become too small. Various experiments were resorted to, and during the summers the "Big Tent"* was used for church services. Finally it was resolved to build. This was no small undertaking in those days. The expense of building homes had drained the finances of the colonists, the salaries of the professors were more or less precarious, while the students for the most part were self-supporting. But the people "had a mind to work" and a suitable edifice, which has since been the home of the First Church at Oberlin (now the United Church), was erected. The building was enclosed in 1842, but was not completed until some time later. It provided sittings for sixteen hundred persons and could accommodate five hundred more. This building, erected at a cost of twelve thousand dollars, furnished a throne for Mr. Finney's eloquence, and here some of his greatest sermons were preached.

In 1838, *The Oberlin Evangelist,* a semimonthly, eight-page quarto, was launched. It soon attained a circulation of five thousand copies. The principal contributors were President Mahan and Professors Finney,

*This tent, one hundred feet in diameter, had been contributed by some of Finney's New York friends to enable him to hold evangelistic meetings in the country round about. It was provided with a blue streamer bearing the inscription in large white letters, "Holiness to the Lord." For a number of years the "Big Tent" accommodated the audiences at the Oberlin Commencement exercises.

Morgan, Cowles, and Cochran. Their work was entirely gratuitous, the only person receiving compensation was an office editor who gave his full time to the paper. Almost every issue contained a sermon by Mr. Finney or President Mahan. Mr. Finney also contributed many letters and other articles to its columns. During 1845-1846 he contributed a series of thirty-two letters on Revivals, in which he supplemented his lectures on the same subject. *The Oberlin Evangelist* was continued for twenty-four years, until during the Civil War, when for the want of support its publication was suspended.

One peculiarity of the Oberlin community, which was fostered by Mr. Finney and his associates, was its open-mindedness and readiness to discuss all questions, religious or otherwise, which were of interest to the people. From the college platform were discussed dietetics, abolitionism, second-adventism, and so forth. Both sides of the question were always considered and the utmost freedom was allowed in the presentation of views. No questions were debated which elicited a keener interest than those pertaining to the interests of religion. In the year 1839 the foundation of moral obligation was discussed in the college chapel by President Mahan and Professor J. P. Cowles of the Theological Department, Professor Finney presiding. President Mahan held to the theory of an intuitive principle of right as the ultimate ground of obligation, while Professor Cowles advocated the utilitarian theory that happiness, or well-being, is the ground of conduct. This discussion was continued for several days, neither of the disputants being able to convince the other of the unsoundness of his views.

At the close of the debate Finney, in summing up the discussion, with his luminous logic combined the two theories into one, in which he argued that happiness, or well-being, is the ultimate good and that obligation is intuitive, but that the latter can be seen only in the presence of the good and must rest upon happiness, or well-being, as the ultimate good. He afterwards elaborated this view as the "Benevolence Theory" in his *Systematic Theology*.

A topic of absorbing interest at this time in Oberlin was the doctrine of the higher life. As early as the summer of 1836 some copies of the New Haven *Perfectionist* were circulated in the community, and although the teachings which it advocated did not receive wide acceptance it served to stimulate inquiry upon the subject. The following autumn, during a religious quickening, many of the students and citizens were led to pray for a fuller consecration of heart to the service of Christ. At one of the services a student arose and asked what measure of help he might reasonably expect in his efforts to lead a Christian life. Were the provisions and promises of the Gospel sufficient to keep him from all sin and enable him to withstand every temptation?

President Mahan promptly answered these questions in the affirmative. The inquiry, however, served to fix his own attention upon the subject with the result that he entered into a new experience which he characterized as a coming out of darkness into light. Others were similarly wrought upon and the belief became prevalent that for all Christians there was a higher plane of living in which an unbroken communion could be

maintained with Christ. To this experience various names were given: "the blessing," "perfect love," "sanctification," the "gift of the Holy Ghost," etc.

Finney's earliest views upon the subject are found in his *Lectures to Professing Christians,* delivered in New York during the winter of 1836-1837. These lectures were printed in the New York *Evangelist,* but seem to have occasioned no special comment at the time. In them he defines sanctification as "perfect obedience to the law of God. The law of God requires perfect, disinterested, impartial benevolence, love to God and love to our neighbor."

With characteristic frankness he disclaims having reached this state of perfect obedience, saying: "I do not myself profess now to have attained perfect sanctification; but if I had attained to it, if I felt that God had really given me the victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil, and made me free from sin, would I keep it a secret, locked up in my own breast, and let my brethren stumble on in ignorance of what the grace of God can do? Never!" Since Finney never afterwards professed perfect obedience, the inference is that never in his own experience did he feel that he had attained that state in the divine life.

As to the attainability of sanctification he says: "There is no *moral inability* to be perfectly holy. Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as Moral Inability. I have always maintained that Christian perfection is a duty, and I am more convinced than ever, during the last few months, that it is *attainable in this life.*" He not only teaches the attainability of sancti-

fication, but contends that it is attainable by faith: "It is faith that must sanctify; it is faith that purifies the heart."

In 1839 Finney elaborated his views in a series of lectures first published in the *Oberlin Evangelist* and afterwards issued in book form under the title *Views of Sanctification*. All that was characteristic or distinctive in his later teachings appears in these lectures. He defines sanctification in "its simple and primary meaning" as "a state of consecration to God. To sanctify is to set apart to a holy use—to consecrate a thing to the service of God. A state of sanctification is a state of consecration, or being set apart to the service of God. This is plainly both the Old and New Testament use of the term."

He distinguishes between entire, or present, and permanent sanctification: "By entire sanctification I understand, the consecration of the whole being to God. In other words, it is that state of devotedness to God and his service required by the moral law. The law is perfect. It requires just what is right, all that is right, and nothing more. Nothing more or less can possibly be perfection or entire sanctification than obedience to the law. Obedience to the law of God in an infant, a man, an angel, and in God himself, is perfection in each of them; and nothing can possibly be perfection in any being short of this, nor can there possibly be anything above it."

"That a thing or person may be for the time being wholly consecrated to God and afterwards desecrated or diverted from that service, is certain. That Adam and

'the angels who kept not their first estate' were entirely sanctified and yet not permanently so, is also certain."

"By permanent sanctification I understand, then, a state not only of entire but of perpetual unending consecration to God."

"Simple obedience to the law of God is what I understand to be present, and its continuance to be permanent sanctification."

That entire or permanent sanctification is attainable in this present life, he contends for the following reasons:

"1. It is self-evident that entire obedience to God's law is possible on the ground of natural ability. To deny this, is to deny that a man is able to do as well as he can. The very language of the law is such as to level its claims to the capacity of the subject, however great or small that capacity may be. 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength.' Here then it is plain that all the law demands, is the exercise of whatever strength we have in the service of God. Now, as entire sanctification consists in perfect obedience to the law of God, and as the law requires nothing more than the right use of whatever strength we have, it is of course forever settled that a state of entire and permanent sanctification is attainable in this life on the ground of natural ability.

"2. The provisions of grace are such as to render its actual attainment in this life the object of reasonable pursuit. It is admitted that the entire and permanent sanctification of the church is to be accomplished. It

is also admitted that this work is to be accomplished 'through the sanctification of the Spirit and the belief of the truth.' It is also universally agreed that this work must be begun here; and also that it must be completed before the soul can enter heaven. This then is the inquiry:

"Is this state attainable as a matter of fact before death; and if so, when, in this life may we expect to attain it?"

There was nothing particularly unorthodox in Finney's views on sanctification, except to those who held that complete, or what Finney would term "permanent sanctification," did not take place until death. Finney held to the opposite viewpoint and contended that sanctification is to be sought and obtained through faith as a present and permanent possession. This question he sought to settle by reference to the Word of God, showing that it promises and exhorts to this very end, making provision against all the occasions of sin and enabling one to overcome it.

Aside from the controversial matter in answer to the objections of Dr. Leonard Woods of Andover, and the criticisms of the Troy Presbytery, the chapters on sanctification in his *Theological Lectures* are practically an expansion of his *Views of Sanctification.* The language is often identical, while the point of view is precisely the same.

Misapprehensions concerning the abolition sentiments then prevalent, about the prominence given to the subject of sanctification, together with various other misunderstandings that became current concerning the school, were a means of bringing it into disrepute

in various sections of the country. When it became noised abroad that Oberlin was to open its doors on equal terms, irrespective of race or color, the cry of "amalgamation" was heard, although this idea was never taught or countenanced in the community.

The number of colored students never was large. With the coming of the Lane "rebels" a single colored student accompanied them. Others came soon after, and from 1840 to 1860 the proportion of colored students was between four and five per cent. After the Civil War the percentage increased somewhat for a time, but soon fell to about the ratio which had prevailed before. Oberlin never was intended as a colored school, nor were any inducements held out to colored students; they simply were received on the same terms as whites. But the attitude of Oberlin on this subject and her well known abolition sympathies created a prejudice against her, a prejudice which was so strong that for four successive years, ending in 1842, attempts were made in the Ohio legislature to abrogate the charter of the college.

Notwithstanding the fact that Finney had said that he would go a hundred miles on his hands and knees to see a man who lived without sin, a hue and cry was raised over "perfectionism." Finney's views upon other phases of Christian truth were also the object of suspicion, and so it came to pass that presbyteries refused to grant ordination to Oberlin graduates, missionary societies would not commission them, and churches sometimes refused to grant letters of dismissal to members wishing to unite with the church at Oberlin. When some of the early students wished to go as missionaries

to the Indians in the Northwest, they asked the American Board (Congregational) to commission them; but the answer was: "We cannot. You are good men, and we wish you well, but it will not do."

This attitude led, in 1846, to the formation of the American Missionary Association, which commissioned scores of Oberlin graduates for work in the home and foreign fields. After the Civil War and the subsidence of old prejudices, the American Missionary Association transferred its foreign fields to the American Board and has since devoted its efforts chiefly to the work of Negro education and evangelization in the Southern States.

Oberlin was destined to suffer also from the rivalry of other institutions, this making it difficult to obtain recognition and harder still to secure funds. The American Education Society was not disposed to assist students at Oberlin as students in other institutions were assisted. A convention, moreover, was called at Cleveland, Ohio, to consider Western Education and Western Colleges. Dr. Lyman Beecher was the moving spirit in this convention and the purpose seemed to be to put Oberlin under the ban and hinder her in every way, one minister expressing the opinion that Oberlin doctrines and the influence there manifest were worse than Roman Catholicism. Mr. Finney attended many of the sessions of this convention, but was denied membership. Speaking of this opposition he wrote: "The policy that we pursued was to let opposition alone. We kept about our own business, and always had as many students as we knew what to do with. Our hands were always full of labor, and we were greatly encouraged in our efforts."

Sometimes the opposition partook of a ludicrous nature. On one occasion Mr. Finney was travelling in his carriage from Oberlin to Akron, and overtaking an elderly lady who was journeying on foot, he invited her to ride. After riding some distance, she inquired, "To whom am I indebted for this ride?" Upon his giving her his name and residence she appeared greatly startled and exclaimed, "From Oberlin! why, our minister said he would as soon send a son to the penitentiary as to Oberlin!"

To add to the embarrassments engendered by this opposition, the institution became involved in financial difficulties. Arthur Tappan and other New York friends had promised great things to the school, but these were only partially realized. The financial panic which swept over the country in 1837 brought financial ruin to most of these men, leaving the college without endowment and heavily involved in debt. Finally it was decided to appeal to England for help, and Messrs. John Keep and William Dawes were sent in 1839 to solicit funds.

Although Finney's *Revival Lectures* had been given a very cordial reception in that country, it was less than twenty-five years since the last war between England and the United States, so that the attitude of the British public at that time was none too friendly towards America. Nevertheless from the friends which they succeeded in raising up, and especially from members of the Society of Friends, otherwise the Quakers, who through their abolition sentiments were friendly towards Oberlin, they secured contributions amounting to six thousand pounds sterling, which nearly, if not quite, sufficed to cancel the outstanding indebtedness. The

school, however, was often sore pressed for funds, involving considerable hardship to Finney and his colleagues. Referring to this period he gave the following incident:

"At one time I saw no means of providing for my family through the winter. Thanksgiving-day came, and found us so poor that I had been obliged to sell my travelling trunk, which I had used in my evangelistic labors, to supply the place of a cow that I had lost. I rose on the morning of Thanksgiving-day and spread our necessities before the Lord. I finally concluded by saying that, if help did not come, I should assume that it was best that it should not, and I would be entirely satisfied with any course that the Lord would see wise to take. I went and preached, and enjoyed my own preaching as well, I think, as I ever did. I had a blessed day to my own soul; I could see that the people enjoyed it exceedingly.

"After meeting I was detained a little while in conversation with some brethren, and my wife returned home. When I reached the gate she was standing in the open door with a letter in her hand. As I approached she smilingly said, 'The answer has come, my dear'; and handed me the letter containing a check from Mr. Josiah Chapin of Providence, for two hundred dollars. He had been here the previous summer with his wife. I said nothing about my wants at all, as I never was in the habit of mentioning them to anybody. But in the letter containing the check he said he had learned that the endowment fund had failed, and that I was in want of help. He intimated that I might expect more from time to time. He continued to send me six hundred

dollars a year for several years, and on this I managed to live."

Notwithstanding all of these difficulties and embarrassments the school grew and prospered. From 1835 to 1840 the attendance increased from 101 to 484. Considering that the school was situated in a pioneer community in the woods of northern Ohio, that its endowment had vanished, and that it was passing through a fiery trial of opposition, this seems remarkable. But the magnet of Finney's name drew students from the Middle States, from New England, from the West Indies, from England, Wales, and Scotland. Among the latter was a younger brother of David Livingstone, the famous missionary to Africa, who sent his first quarterly salary as a missionary to this brother urging him to go to Oberlin. In 1851 Professor Finney was made president of the college, and the next year the attendance leaped from 571 to 1020, ever remaining above the one thousand mark except for a time during the Civil War.

When Finney accepted the professorship in theology at Oberlin his system of theology had not yet been formulated. In the sermons which he had preached, he had elaborated with more or less fulness many of the important doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the divine government, repentance, the atonement, regeneration, election, reprobation, etc. His theory of virtue, to which reference has been made, and his doctrine of sanctification were developed at Oberlin. This was true of other phases of his system. In 1841 William Cochrane, then a student in the theological department, read and published a paper on *The Simplicity of Moral*

Action, holding to the impossibility of a divided heart in moral action and affirming that the sinner, in his sin, is wholly destitute of righteousness, while the Christian in his obedience is wholly conformed to the Lord's will. This paper won over the entire theological faculty, with the possible exception of Professor Cowles, and Finney forthwith incorporated it into his system of theology.

Finney began the publication of his theological views as early as 1840 in a volume, *Skeletons of a Course of Theological Lectures.* Six or seven years later he published Volumes II and III of his *Lectures on Systematic Theology,* it being his intention to prepare another volume on natural theology to precede these. This volume, however, was never written. In 1850, when in England, he rewrote his lectures and published them in a single volume for the benefit of the British public. After his death this volume was abridged by President Fairchild and published at Oberlin in 1878. After the death of E. J. Goodrich, the Oberlin publisher, in 1912, the plates of this edition which had been lost for many years were found, and a new edition was published in New York.

The theology of Charles G. Finney was the theology of an evangelist. All theology is designed to justify the ways of God to men. It is one thing, however, to confirm and strengthen faith by showing that it rests upon reason; but it is quite another to create faith by appealing to reason. The latter was the determining principle in Finney's system. The one great obstacle which had confronted him in his work of evangelism was the theory then prevalent of a necessitated will. To combat that theory was one of the great objects of his theology.

The obligation to obey the moral law; the theory of virtue, or the end of obedience; the necessity of serving God with an undivided heart; the essence of man's sinfulness, as set forth in his doctrine of moral depravity; the atonement as a means to remove the obstacle to forgiveness caused by man's disobedience; the necessity for repentance; the nature of regeneration; the justification of the sinner through the pardon of his offences; sanctification, or the life of continued obedience; divine election; reprobation; and the perseverance of the saints, constitute the principal elements in his system.

As a teacher, the attitude of Mr. Finney towards his pupils was that of a fellow student rather than a master. The story is told of one of the early students, that Finney went to his room early one morning and roused him from his slumbers to tell him that he, the student, had been right and himself wrong in the statement of a theological proposition the day before.

"His method of instruction," said President Fairchild, "was to draw out his pupils in inquiry and discussion, and thus establish in them the power and habit of independent thought. All his own views, as well as those of his pupils, were subjected to this ordeal; and it was no rare thing for him to readjust his doctrinal statement to meet the new light which he had thus obtained. It was vain to bring against his better view some former argument or statement of his own. He would smilingly reply to any such suggestion, 'Well, I don't agree with Finney on that point.' It was his aim to be right rather than consistent. But his interest in philosophical truth was always subordinate to his great

aim of bringing human souls to God, and thus his great anxiety in reference to his pupils always was that the Gospel should possess their hearts and shape their lives. No member of his class was in doubt that this was the burden of his soul."

In 1851, upon the resignation of Dr. Asa Mahan, Finney was elected to the presidency of Oberlin College, with the understanding that he was not to be burdened with the routine and details of the office, but that he should give his attention to its more public duties. His work as a teacher remained unchanged, with the exception that for a time he instructed the senior college class in moral philosophy. In 1858 he surrendered the chair of systematic theology, but retained his work as instructor in pastoral theology and as pastor of the church. After serving fifteen years as president of the college, in 1865, because of advancing years, he resigned the presidency, but continued his pastoral duties until 1872, and his lectures in pastoral theology until his death, in 1875.

Chapter IX

Subsequent Evangelistic Labors

As has been intimated in the preceding chapter, Finney, in accepting the Oberlin professorship, did not expect to devote his entire time to the theological classroom, but planned to give a part of it to outside labors. The long winter vacation enabled him to do this without interfering seriously with his duties as an instructor. For two or three winters he returned to the Broadway Tabernacle, New York, and on subsequent occasions labored elsewhere. Reference has already been made to his later efforts in Rochester and Boston. In this connection it remains to be said that he conducted extensive revivals in Providence, Rhode Island; Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio; Detroit and elsewhere in Michigan; Hartford, Connecticut; and Syracuse, Western, and Rome, New York. He also conducted two extensive campaigns in England, the first in 1849-1850 and the second in 1858-1859.

Mr. Finney's *Revival Lectures* had created a very favorable impression in England, and he received invitations from various sources to visit that country. In the autumn of 1849 he saw fit to accept them, and after a stormy passage landed at Southampton. Here he was

met by the pastor from Houghton, where he commenced his labors in a dissenting chapel under the patronage of Mr. Potto Brown, a wealthy and generous-spirited man, who gave large sums for benevolent and religious purposes. A revival commenced immediately, attracting people from a distance of forty miles, and becoming so general that it soon extended to the neighboring villages round about. Mr. Brown was especially concerned for a number of his acquaintances, nearly all of whom were converted in the course of the revival.

From Houghton Finney was invited to Birmingham. At first he was asked to preach in rotation at all of the Congregational and Baptist churches in the city, after which his labors were confined chiefly to Carr's Lane Chapel, of which John Angell James was then the pastor; to the congregation of Mr. Roe, a Baptist pastor; and to Ebenezer Chapel, which at the time was without a pastor.

John Angell James, author of *The Anxious Inquirer,* at that time was the best known dissenting minister in England. Although he had written an introductory chapter for one of the early English editions of Finney's *Revival Lectures,* commending it "as a book remarkably calculated to stir up the minds both of ministers and churches to a proper compassion for a dying world," nevertheless on account of certain letters which he had received from America, he was inclined, at first, to look with suspicion upon Mr. Finney. But after he had heard him several times and had had a thorough interchange of theological views with him, he became convinced that his teachings were not heretical, and so he entered into the work with great cordiality.

There were a great many conversions in the city, the vestries of the churches where Finney conducted services often being filled to overflowing with anxious inquirers. Among the converts was a Unitarian minister who, after hearing the evangelist preach on Resisting the Holy Ghost, was so impressed that on his way home he vowed before God that he would consecrate himself afresh to Christ as his only Saviour.

Finney proceeded next to Worcester, where on alternate week nights and Sabbath evenings he preached in the pulpit of Dr. George Redford, a well known English theologian, and in that of a Baptist minister in the same city. Several wealthy gentlemen were so impressed with his work that they proposed to build for him a portable tabernacle seating six thousand people that could easily be taken down and transported from place to place by railway. Listening to the advice of Worcester ministers, he declined the offer, although he afterwards had occasion to regret it, for he found that the dissenting chapels in many places were small, while such a tabernacle as had been proposed would have enabled him to accomplish much larger results than were possible through the ordinary channels.

From Worcester he went to London, whither he had been invited by Dr. John Campbell, editor of the *British Banner* and pastor of Whitefield's Tabernacle, Moorfields. On Wednesday, May 8, he was presented to the annual meeting of the Congregational Union, representing all of the churches of that denomination throughout England and Wales, by Dr. Redford who gave an interesting account of Finney's work in Worcester and commended him highly. Finney then ad-

dressed the Union for nearly an hour, after which a hearty vote of welcome and commendation was extended. The following Sunday Finney began a series of meetings at the Tabernacle, preaching at first on Sunday mornings and evenings, and on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday evenings, later adding a prayer meeting address on Monday evenings and reserving Thursday evenings to meet inquirers. Religion in London had declined to such an extent that week day services were meagerly attended, but such numbers flocked to these services that Dr. Campbell expressed the opinion that Finney preached to more people on week day evenings than all of the rest of the London ministers put together.

After he had been preaching some time Finney asked for a room in which to hold an inquiry meeting. Dr. Campbell thought that the interest was not sufficient to warrant it, but as Finney was insistent he finally suggested a room in the church that would hold forty people. "Why," said Finney, "that is not half large enough!" The pastor expressed his doubt and astonishment, but at last named a room in the neighborhood that would accommodate sixteen hundred people. "That is just the place," said Finney. Dr. Campbell ventured the opinion that such a thing might do in America, but not in London. Finney replied: "The gospel is as well adapted to the English people as to the American people. I know what the state of the people is better than you do; and I have no fears at all that pride will keep them from responding to such a call." He made the call, being careful to explain that Christians were not wanted at the meeting, that careless sinners were not wanted,

but only those who were so concerned about their souls that they were ready to make their peace with God and wished instruction as to present duty.

From a window Dr. Campbell looked out nervously and anxiously to see whether any in the congregation would go. To his utter amazement Cowper Street was crowded with people hastening to the inquiry room, which was filled to overflowing. Mr. Finney addressed them for a short time on the question of immediate duty, and endeavored to make them understand that they must yield themselves entirely to God's will, make their submission to Him as their righteous Sovereign, and accept Jesus Christ as their only Redeemer. He said: "I had been in England long enough to feel the necessity of doing away with their idea of waiting God's time. London is, and long has been, cursed with hyper-Calvinistic preaching. After having laid the gospel net thoroughly around them, I then prepared to draw it to shore."

Just as he was about to ask them to kneel a man in the congregation cried out in deepest agony of mind, "I have sinned away my day of grace!" Seeing that there was danger of an outburst of feeling Finney hushed it as best he could and asked the people to kneel down but to keep so quiet that they could hear every word of the prayer which he was about to offer. This they did with manifest effort, although there was weeping and repressed sobbing all over the house. Similar meetings of inquiry were held during Finney's stay in London which continued for nine months with the result that great numbers were converted.

Finney accompanied Dr. Campbell to a school one day to address the pupils, a considerable number of

whom afterwards united with the church to the great surprise of the pastor, who was expecting no such results. "The fact is," said Finney, "that the ministers in England as well as in this country, had lost sight, in a great measure, of the necessity for pressing present obligation home upon the consciences of the people. Ministers talk about sinners, and do not make the impression that God commands them *now* to repent; and *thus they throw their ministry away.*"

During Finney's labors in London, Henry Ward Beecher was in England on a visit and, in a letter to the *New York Independent,* he wrote his impressions of Finney's work in the city. He said:

"On two occasions we were present, when, at the close of the Sabbath evening's service, more than a thousand persons presented themselves in an adjoining hall as inquirers. Nor have we ever witnessed in any place more solemnity, order, and unexceptionable propriety in the conduct of meetings, than has prevailed under Mr. Finney at the Tabernacle. And now, if we were an English clergyman, and if we were inclined to doubt the reality of revivals, and, seeing the results of Mr. Finney's labors, should hear it testified from the land of revivals that they were spurious, that good as they might now seem, they would end in mischief, we should conclude, not against Mr. Finney, but against revivals. We should say, 'If these are spurious all revivals are spurious.' This is the tendency of the efforts put forth by religious newspapers in America to undermine Mr. Finney in England. For the sake of pushing at a theological antagonist, they are deepening the impression, already too deep, that revivals of religion are

disorders; the channels of mischief and not of blessings. . . .

"Our English brethren ought to understand that the opinions expressed by several religious newspapers on this side are not the opinions of the American church; that there is a large proportion of American Christians differing from Mr. Finney in his views of Christian perfection, and not ignorant of some evils in his early labors, who, notwithstanding, regard his life to have been an era in the revival history of America, and his labors, upon the whole, to have been a religious blessing to the cause of God in America. Another generation will sift the chaff from the wheat, and then, we firmly believe, few men will be found to have been better husbandmen than Charles G. Finney! May God long spare his life and increase his usefulness!"

After laboring nine months in London Mr. Finney found himself under the necessity of returning to America and his duties at Oberlin College. He accordingly bade a reluctant farewell to his English brethren and sailed for this country.

In the early winter of 1851-1852 Mr. Finney was invited to Hartford, Connecticut. At that time there was a lack of unity, in regard to questions of theology, between Dr. Joel Hawes and Dr. Horace Bushnell, the two leading Congregational pastors in the city. Dr. Hawes thought that Dr. Bushnell was unsound on the doctrine of the atonement. But these brethren attended the meetings conducted by Finney in a third church, and when they saw the manifestations of divine grace they decided to lay aside their differences so as not to be stumblingblocks in the way of the salvation of sin-

ners. After this reconciliation there was a good degree of cordiality and the work spread throughout the entire city.

A Hartford correspondent wrote to the *New York Independent* of this revival: "With reference to the results, I would first allude, with gratitude to God, to the union and fellowship which has been to a good degree restored among the ministers and churches which have engaged in the work. If nothing else has been accomplished, this alone would repay the outlay of time and power. There is reason to believe that a work of permanent good has been done in this respect, and that hereafter we shall all be found standing side by side in the belief and defence of evangelical doctrine, and the practice of that genuine piety whose essence is love. As the next result, I would advert to the conversion among church members. These have seemingly been not a few. Mr. F. has preached so pure a gospel and held up so high a standard, that many self-deceived professors have renounced their hopes and gone into the inquiry-meetings and there found Christ in reality, while true Christians have been deeply searched, greatly humbled and clearly brought out into a new state of advanced spirituality."

A great revival broke out in the public school. The boys came together one morning under such conviction that they were unable to study and asked their teacher to pray with them. He was not a Christian but this circumstance led to his conviction and conversion, after which he led his school to Christ. Prayer meetings for women under the leadership of Mrs. Finney were largely attended. Large numbers flocked to the inquiry

meetings even when the invitation was carefully guarded. The entire community was stirred, and as a result of this spiritual awakening upwards of six hundred persons were received into the several churches of Hartford.

The people of the city Finney found to be very fastidious, and the ministers, especially Dr. Hawes, seemed to be afraid to call on sinners to come forward and give themselves publicly to God. But Finney, with his characteristic fearlessness and aggressiveness, threw aside all restraint and urged the people to come forward publicly and consecrate themselves to the service of Christ. Dr. Hawes at first looked on with fear and trembling, but afterwards confessed, "I have always seen that something was needed to bring persons to a stand, and to induce them to act on their present convictions; but I have not had the courage to propose anything of the kind."

In 1852-1853 Finney labored in Syracuse, New York. He commenced in the Congregational Church, which had a small membership and was rent by dissension and strife. Under his preaching there soon was a stirring among the dry bones. The church was greatly strengthened, so that not long afterwards it became necessary to erect a larger meetinghouse, and it entered upon a more prosperous history. The revival spread to other churches throughout the city with the result that some hundreds were converted.

In 1854-1855 he again conducted fruitful revivals at Western and Rome, New York, after an absence of more than thirty years. The following winter he spent in Rochester, and the two seasons thereafter in Boston.

In December, 1858, Mr. Finney visited England a second time, laboring first at Houghton and Saint Ives, where interesting revivals were experienced. The former pastor at Houghton, Rev. James Harcourt, was now pastor of Borough Road Chapel, London, and he at once invited Mr. Finney to conduct services in his church. A happy revival followed which healed an unfortunate division in the church, and its influence was felt for years afterwards.

Mr. Finney's health was now somewhat impaired by his arduous labors and he accepted an invitation from a Christian physician at Huntingdon to go to his home for a season of rest. This physician had eight children, all of whom were unconverted, while one of his sons, a young physician, had become thoroughly skeptical. In a few weeks Finney began to preach in Temperance Hall, a large audience room which was placed at his disposal. Although there never had been a revival in the place and the people had no conception of what it would be, the hall was immediately filled with interested listeners, and the Spirit of God was poured out upon the people.

One Sunday evening Mr. Finney preached from the text: "The hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand." He exposed the refuges of lies under which men were hiding, and he graphically pictured the destructive work of the hail and the descending torrents of rain which swept away all that the hail had not demolished. The young physician went to his home in an agony of spirit, but by

morning had made his peace with God. During the course of the revival all of the remaining unconverted members of the family were gathered into the fold of Christ. To care for the results of this work there and to perpetuate it, a chapel was built at Huntingdon.

After laboring a second time in London Mr. Finney accepted an urgent invitation to visit Edinburgh, Scotland, from Rev. Dr. Kirk of the Evangelical Union Church, a denomination which was the outgrowth of a remarkable revival which had been occasioned by the reading of Finney's *Revival Lectures*. A notable quickening followed and Finney was invited by a minister of the same denomination to Aberdeen. Here denominational prejudices interfered with the work for a time, but under the blessing of God the opposition was overruled and a gracious revival swept over the city.

Returning to England he labored for three months at Bolton, which had been one of John Wesley's favorite fields of labor. The revival commenced immediately. The first evening the wife of his host and two servants were converted at a private prayer meeting. After a week of prayer, meetings were commenced in a large hall which was filled to overflowing. Conversions multiplied on every hand. Into this work the Congregationalists and Methodists as well as other denominations and members of the Established Church entered very heartily, while a delightful spirit of unity prevailed among them.

At first the Methodists were inclined to be somewhat noisy and demonstrative in their prayers, so that Finney was obliged to call attention to the fact that in-

quirers could think more effectively if there was less noise, that they needed instruction, and must be freed from confusion if they were to hear understandingly and be converted. The effect of this advice was highly beneficial and there was a perceptible increase in the numbers of inquirers. The sum total of persons awakened to the claims of God and religion was estimated to be not less than two thousand. At the conclusion of Finney's labors in Bolton, a "presentation service" was held at which a purse of gold and the following testimonial were presented:

"To the Rev. Charles G. Finney, Principal of Oberlin College, Ohio, United States, America.

"REV. AND DEAR SIR:—It is with deep regret, but also with cordial feeling and devout gratitude to the Father of mercies and God of all grace, that we assemble to bid you 'Farewell' at the close of your arduous labors in our midst. We own the Providence which directed your steps to our town, and we feel that we can never cease to be your debtors for the earnest and self-sacrificing efforts which you have made, while with us, to deepen the spiritual life in our own hearts, to increase our devotion and enjoyment of the gospel, to secure the salvation of our friends, and to extend the Redeemer's kingdom in this important and densely populated district. Some of us owe you our own souls; others the salvation of near relatives and dear friends; and all of us, without exception, have derived unspeakable benefits from your labors. And we gratefully record the fact that these blessings have been shared by vast numbers of our fellow townsmen; that some thousands

have been awakened to a sense of the claims of religion —that many hundreds have found a peace and a new life in Christ Jesus—that family religion has been greatly promoted—and that there have been large accessions to our various churches. Now that your labors have come to a close, we feel bound to acknowledge the grace of God which has been manifested in and through your instrumentality, and we beg you to receive the assurance of our deep and fervent esteem for your person, and our ceaseless interest in your labor. Wherever you go, we will follow you with our earnest prayers and deepest sympathies. May you be long spared to labor, and after you have finished your course with joy, may you receive the crown of life that fadeth not away, and shine as the brightness of the firmament in the kingdom of our Father forever and ever."

A similar "presentation" was made to Mrs. Finney on another occasion, and the highest expressions of appreciation were given for the invaluable assistance which she had rendered in connection with her husband's labors.

From Bolton Finney went to Manchester, where there were many conversions, but as there was wanting that spirit of unity which had characterized the work at Bolton, the revival was neither so general nor so sweeping as it had been in the latter place. Of the work at Manchester, *The Revival,* a weekly published in London, gave the following account:

"Mr. Finney is well known in America and England. His preaching is marked by strong peculiarities. It is highly argumentative—keenly logical—yet, being composed of good strong Saxon, is intelligible to the com-

mon people. Boldness, verging to severity, is one of its chief characteristics. Unpalatable truths are urged with a fearless courage. Human responsibility and the obligation of every one to repent and believe the gospel are handled with a master's grasp. Professors are not suffered to hide beneath the covert of mere formalism, or an orthodox creed. Masks, pretexts, subterfuges of all sorts, are exposed; and the selfish, the worldly, the cowardly, the inconsistent, are driven from their retreats. Then comes the gospel, with its full and free antidote to despair; its gracious invitations to the penitent; its pardon and peace for the believing. Mr. F. is sixty-eight years of age, and has been a laborious worker in the cause of God forty years; yet he preaches with wonderful energy six times every week, and after every service holds meetings for anxious inquirers. The meetings for inquiry have been attended variably as to numbers, but, altogether, some hundreds of anxious souls have been gathered on these occasions. Many striking instances of conversion have occurred. Many backsliders have been reclaimed. Many professors have been quickened with new life. Rich and poor are all alike proving the power of truth. Cases of restitution are not uncommon. Merchants, tradesmen, servants who have robbed employers, have confessed and restored what they had dishonestly obtained. . . .

"Mrs. Finney's meetings have also produced a considerable effect. They have had a salutary and blessed influence on many a wife and mother; many have been stirred up to pray for themselves; and their husbands and children have seen, in several instances already, the answers to their prayers."

Upon the conclusion of his labors in Manchester Finney returned to America and resumed his duties at Oberlin. For nearly forty years he had been a conspicuous figure in the American church, laboring through evil as well as good report for the salvation of men. His advancing years and the state of his health would no longer permit the continuance of his public revival work. For several years he retained his connection with the college and supplied the pulpit of the First Church, in which his labors were abundantly blessed, the years 1860, 1866, and 1867 being characterized by revivals of unusual magnitude.

Chapter X

Finney as an Evangelist

Whitefield and the Wesleys were the forerunners of the latter day evangelist. Instead of devoting themselves to the work of settled pastorates, they went in their flaming zeal from place to place to proclaim the "unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ" and to win men from sin to righteousness. They thus prepared the way for others who followed in their footsteps, with the consequence that, for a century and more, the work of the itinerant evangelist has bulked more or less largely in the life and work of the evangelical churches.

Not until within the last fifty years, however, has the technique of the modern evangelist been perfected. In an earlier day evangelists devoted their efforts to house to house visitation, to preaching, and to "meetings for the anxious" which were conducted for the purpose of instructing seekers in the way of salvation. To Dwight L. Moody we are indebted for the union evangelistic campaign, when the churches of a city would unite in a series of meetings to win men to Christ. He also introduced the idea of the singing evangelist, taking with him as his coworker Ira D. Sankey who did so much to popularize and make effective the work of Mr. Moody.

It was the genius of B. Fay Mills which, adding to the innovations of Mr. Moody, brought to perfection the modern evangelistic campaign. Months before a series of meetings was inaugurated an executive committee of ministers and laymen was at work. To prepare for the campaign three committees were set to work—a Committee on Finance, to provide funds to carry on the meetings; a Committee on Visitation, to divide the city into districts and see that every family was given an invitation to attend the services; and a Committee on Music, to organize and train a large chorus choir.

For the direct work of the revival three additional committees were appointed—a Committee on Advertising, to see that the necessary publicity was secured; a Devotional Committee, to arrange for daily prayer meetings; and a Committee on Ushers. The ushers were charged not only with the duty of seating and looking after the comfort of those whose attended the services, but they also had the supervision of personal work, directing seekers after salvation, instructing young converts, and seeing that decision cards were signed at the close of each service. Under proper leadership an evangelistic campaign so planned and organized could hardly fail to be effective.

In comparison with the methods of B. Fay Mills, which have since been employed by every successful evangelist, or even with those of Dwight L. Moody, the methods of Charles G. Finney were few and simple. There was no carefully planned and organized campaign, no union of forces throughout a city, no cooperation by the churches of various denominations.

On the contrary, often he had to stand alone and contend for the faith in the midst of the most persistent and virulent opposition. He was misrepresented and abused by those with whom he differed, yet in the face of it all the most remarkable results were achieved under his ministry. Dr. Theodore L. Cuyler said "he probably led more souls to Jesus than any other man during the nineteenth century."

In the accomplishment of his mighty results Finney's main reliance was upon preaching. The truths which he preached were especially suited to the age in which he lived and were calculated to arouse men from their state of apathy and indifference to a sense of their immediate need for repentance and acceptance of the Gospel of Christ. The Calvinistic conceptions of God's sovereignty, man's inability, divine election, etc., had been pushed to such extremes as to lead to a sort of fatalism. Men were taught that they could do nothing to save themselves; they must wait "God's time"; if God chose to save them He would do so; otherwise they would perish in their sins. The soul was passive in regeneration. If men were of the elect, in due time the Holy Spirit would convert them; but if they were of the nonelect, nothing they could do for themselves, nothing anyone else could do for them, would avail for their salvation.

In consequence of such teachings as these, an alarming indifference to religion was prevalent. The current doctrines were made a pretext for neglecting the claims of the Gospel. When approached upon the subject of religion the unconverted would say, "If we are to be saved, we shall be saved; but if we are to be lost,

we shall be lost." Sin, moreover, was taught as an inheritance from Adam. Men were not sinners by choice, but by birth; hence in many quarters sin was looked upon as a calamity for which men were in no wise responsible, and sinners consequently were to be pitied rather than blamed.

Finney, on the contrary, preached that the sinner's "cannot" was his "will not," and that ability was commensurate with responsibility. Instead of holding them unable to do anything to save themselves, he preached from the text, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die?" that sinners were bound to make themselves new hearts. Many had thought that they could as soon create a new world as to do that, but Mr. Finney showed that it was entirely practicable for them to do so by meeting the requirements laid down in the Scriptures, and making use of the provisions of the Gospel.

Instead of waiting God's time, he said, You have waited too long already. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." You need not wait for God, because He has been waiting for you, and "now commandeth all men everywhere to repent." God's command to repent implies man's ability to obey. It would be unjust in God to make such a command unless men were able to obey. It was the sinner's duty therefore to confess and forsake his sins without delay.

He emphasized the fact, moreover, that men were responsible for their sins. They were sinners, not by birth or from necessity, but from choice. The consequences of sin would overtake them, not on account of any inherited predisposition to sin, but because of

their wilful transgression of God's law and their rebellion against Him and His government. Sin was not a calamity or an inheritance, but a voluntary transgression of the law, a foolish and wicked choice of one's own way in preference to God's way. He said:

"I assumed that moral depravity is and must be a voluntary attitude of the mind, that it does and must consist in the committal of the will to the gratification of the desires. One doctor of divinity told me that he felt a great deal more like weeping over sinners than blaming them. I replied that I did not wonder, if he believed that they had a sinful nature, and that sin was entailed upon them and they could not help it."

He affirmed that it was putting a stumblingblock in the way of the church and the world to teach "a nature sinful in itself, a total inability to obey God, and condemnation to eternal death for the sin of Adam. When men asked God to forgive them, they were to commit themselves unalterably to his will."

In all of his teachings he did not overlook the agency of the Holy Spirit. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." No man emphasized this truth more constantly or forcibly than did Mr. Finney. He recognized the fact that it was the work of the Spirit to "reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"; but, he insisted, the Holy Spirit works through means and instrumentalities, and if these are used in the manner prescribed by the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will make use of them in bringing sinners to repentance.

It was Mr. Finney's aim to convert men by the truth. He rebuked them, not for the sins of Adam, but

for their own sins, and exhorted them to make their peace with God. He sought out every hiding place of the sinner and left him without excuse and without refuge. He did not preach about sinners, but directly to them. Often he would say, "Do not think I am talking about anybody else; but I mean you, and you, and you."

That men were converted by his searching presentation of the truth, there can be no question. Under his preaching they were turned from their viciousness, their penuriousness, and their self-idolatry. Criminals were reformed, and evil-minded men and women were induced to abandon their wickedness. Business men of good repute came forward and publicly confessed that they had underpaid their clerks, had cheated their customers, and had resorted to unfair methods with their competitors. Both in this country and in England large sums of money which had been obtained by the use of underhanded ways or fraudulent methods were restored.* Charitable purposes received a fresh impulse, while entire communities were transformed and revolutionized.

Upon commencing revival labors Mr. Finney would first address himself to the church, reproving it for the sins of lukewarmness, worldliness, and neglect of the work of converting men. The church having become awakened by his powerful presentation of the truth and Christians having become aroused to work

*At Bolton, England, after Finney had preached upon Restitution, some hundreds—indeed it was believed thousands—of pounds sterling were restored to persons from whom money had been dishonestly obtained or withheld; the sums varied from small amounts to a single payment of £300 (*The Revival,* March 17, 1860).

and pray for the impenitent, he turned his attention to the unconverted, vividly bringing before them the requirements of God's law, its penalties and the justice with which these were enforced, the awfulness of man's guilt in transgressing that law and his failure to meet its requirements.

The cardinal truths of the Gospel were emphasized, and by every means within his power the great revivalist sought to reconcile men to God. In his preaching he adapted the truth to the needs of the locality. If the atmosphere of the place was Calvinistic he dwelt upon man's responsibility, but if it was Arminian he preached God upon the throne.

The means which he used for the promotion of revivals were neither extravagant nor extraordinary. He did not favor multiplying meetings unnecessarily. In his Letters on Revivals in the *Oberlin Evangelist* he said:

"We added to the services of the Sabbath as many meetings during the week as could well be attended, and yet allow the people to carry forward their necessary business; and we went no further than this. The grand error which seems to me to have prevailed for the last few years is this: Churches that are attempting to promote revivals, break in for a time on all the necessary duties of domestic, commercial, agricultural, and mechanical life; and make little or no effort to sustain the interests of religion, promote the conversion of sinners and the sanctification of the Church, at other seasons."

He did not oppose protracted meetings, but he thought that it was the duty of churches "to make

special and extraordinary efforts at every season of the year when time can be spared from other necessary avocations to attend particularly to the great work of saving souls."

Although severely censured by his opponents as an innovator, Finney as a matter of fact was inclined to be cautious and conservative in the employment of novel methods and never defended their use on the score of the methods themselves. He believed, however, that "new measures" were justifiable at times for the purpose of awakening the attention of the people to the truth. His views as to the use of "new measures" are instructive and valuable. In his *Lectures on Revivals* he said:

"A minister should never introduce innovations that are not called for. If he does they will embarrass him. He cannot alter the Gospel; that remains the same. But new measures are necessary from time to time, to awaken attention and bring the Gospel to bear upon the public mind. And then a minister ought to know how to introduce new things, so as to create the least possible resistance or re-action. Mankind are fond of form in religion. They love to have their religious duties stereotyped, so as to leave them at ease; and they are therefore inclined to resist any new movement designed to rouse them up to action and feeling. Hence it is all important to introduce new things wisely, so as not to give needless occasion for apology or resistance."

In addition to preaching services, especially during his earlier ministry, he spent a great portion of his time in house to house visitation. Frequently, when he

was seen to enter a home, the neighbors would come flocking from every direction. Prayers would then be offered, the claims of the Gospel would be presented, instructions would be given to anxious inquirers, while their needs and difficulties would be frankly considered and met. This house to house visitation supplemented the public services and served to augment the interest which had been aroused. It was his custom also to conduct meetings of inquiry, which Dr. Charles P. Bush has described as follows:

"Mr. Finney's method of conducting an inquiry meeting is worthy of special mention. He allowed no confusion, no loud talking, no moving about, except as he passed quietly from one to another, asking a few questions in a subdued tone of voice, and addressing to each a few words of instruction and admonition. He did not commit this most difficult and delicate business to all alike; although he did sometimes call to his aid a few well-chosen friends, of ripe Christian experience.

"When he met a case of peculiar interest, he might, indeed, stop and call attention to it before going further; might make it the occasion of exact and definite instruction, and then commend the individual to God in special prayer. But the solemnity of eternity always brooded over those meetings. Common talk was excluded. All felt that God was there; and that immortal souls were in peril and anguish; and Mr. Finney moved about as the thoughtful physician moves in the room of the sick and the dying."

His thorough understanding of human nature stood him well in hand in this delicate work. The story is

told of a flippant young infidel who went into an inquiry meeting chiefly through curiosity. When Mr. Finney approached him, he began to quote some of the stock arguments of infidelity. Mr. Finney merely turned his great searching eyes upon him, gave him one look of mingled scorn and pity, and passed on. The youth perceived in an instant that the man of God had read him through and through, and was confounded. Mighty conviction came upon him and as a humble penitent he soon sought for mercy. He afterwards acknowledged that nothing could have so touched him and brought him to his senses as that silent rebuke.

In dealing with individuals the great revivalist was characterized by rare tact and wisdom. A gentleman once acknowledged his belief in Deity but admitted that he did not worship and obey Him as he should. Finney thereupon replied: "Why should I give you further instruction and further light, if you will not do your duty and obey the light you already have? When you will make up your mind to live up to your convictions, to obey God according to the best light you have; when you will make up your mind to repent of your neglect thus far, and to please God just as well as you know how, the rest of your life, I will try to show you that the Bible is from God. Until then it is of no use to do any such thing." Admitting the reasonableness of this position, the man went his way, did as he was directed, became a generous and useful Christian, and subsequently served as a trustee of Oberlin College.

A thoughtful man told him that he could not receive the Bible because it teaches that "God has imputed

Adam's sin to all his posterity, that we inherit the guilt of sin by nature, and are exposed to eternal damnation for the guilt of Adam's sin." Finney asked him for the chapter and verse where such a doctrine was taught, and the man began to quote from the Westminster Catechism, but Finney stopped him with the remark that he was quoting the Catechism and not the Bible. Very much surprised that a Presbyterian clergyman should call in question the teachings of the Catechism, the man went on to argue that the Bible commanded men to repent, and at the same time taught them that they could not repent. He said furthermore the Bible teaches that Christ died for the elect only and commanded all men, whether of the elect or non-elect, to believe on pain of eternal death. Mr. Finney again called his attention to the fact that these were not the teachings of the Bible, but the instructions of men. "Well then," he exclaimed with some impatience, "Mr. Finney, do tell me what you believe!" Finney then told him what he believed the Bible taught about Adam's sin and his own, and reasoned with him concerning these things until the man was enlightened, satisfied, and converted.

On another occasion, in the home where he was stopping, a devoted Christian woman had gotten into a despairing frame of mind, but was deeply concerned, nevertheless, for an impenitent young man who was opposing the revival. Mr. Finney said to her one day: "Aunt Lucy, when you and B—— die God will have to make a partition in Hell and give you a room by yourself." "Oh, Mr. Finney!" "Yes," he continued, "here he is raving against God, and you are almost insane

to see him in such a condition. Can two persons in such opposite frames of mind, do you think, be sent to the same place?" Her features relaxed and for the first time in many days she smiled. Finally she laughed and said, "We cannot." Her despair left her and she became as joyful as a young convert.

During the first Rochester revival Mr. Finney commenced the use of the anxious seat. This measure originated with the Methodists. During the winter of 1806-1807 there was a remarkable revival in New York which resulted in the accession of more than four hundred persons to the Methodist Episcopal Church. The congregations were so large and it became so difficult to pray and converse with seekers that they were invited to the front seats, which were vacated for the purpose. This measure came into general use, not only among the Methodists but among other religious denominations. Finney, during his early revival labors, had often felt the need for such a measure. As he says:

"I had sometimes asked persons in the congregation to stand up; but this I had not frequently done. However, in studying upon the subject, I had often felt the necessity of some measure that would bring sinners to a stand. From my own experience and observation I had found, that with the higher classes especially, the greatest obstacle to be overcome was their fear of being known as anxious inquirers. They were too proud to take any position that would reveal them to others as anxious for their souls.

"I had found also that something was needed, to make the impression on them that they were expected at once to give up their hearts; something that would

call them to act, and act as publicly before the world, as they had in their sins; something that would commit them publicly to the service of Christ. When I had called them simply to stand up in the public congregation, I found that this had a very good effect; and so far as it went, it answered the purpose for which it was intended. But after all, I had felt for some time, that something more was necessary to bring them out from among the mass of the ungodly, to a public renunciation of their sinful ways, and a public committal of themselves to God."

From that time Finney made a general use of the measure, except in rare instances when, through deference to customary usage, it seemed expedient to do otherwise.

He insisted upon the anointing of the Holy Spirit as a very necessary qualification for success in winning souls, and said:

"When Christ commissioned his apostles to go and preach, he told them to abide at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high. This was the indispensable qualification for success in their ministry. The baptism was a divine purifying, an anointing, bestowing on them a divine illumination, filling them with faith and love, with peace and power, so that their words were made sharp in the hearts of God's enemies, quick and powerful like a two-edged sword. This is an indispensable qualification of a successful ministry; and I have been surprised and pained that, to this day, so little stress is laid upon this qualification for preaching Christ to a sinful world."

In all of his revival work he strongly emphasized the

necessity for prevailing prayer. One cannot study the revivals which Finney conducted without being impressed by the fact that much of his success as a winner of souls is attributable to his power in prayer. Of himself he said:

"In regard to my own experience, I will say that unless I had the spirit of prayer I could do nothing. If even for a day or an hour I lost the spirit of grace and supplication, I found myself unable to preach with power and efficiency, or to win souls by personal conversation."

The enemies of Mr. Finney sought to give the impression that the revivals identified with his name were neither very deep nor lasting. Central New York was referred to as a "burnt district," and it was affirmed that the churches in that section of the state were long in recovering from the effects of those revivals, but Dr. Fowler, historian of the Synod of Central New York, wrote: "'Ye shall know them by their fruits.' The scene of these revivals lies before us, and their effects have had time for development, and what do we see? No 'burnt district' certainly, as in their day, and sometimes since it was called, the occurrence of what it was presumed must be, being mistaken for what is; but a quick and fertile soil, a harvest field, a beautiful garden. Revivals have made it the land of revivals."

During the winter of 1862-1863 Rev. E. P. Hammond was invited to labor in that region, and speaking of his work *The Interior* said: "When Mr. Hammond left New York City to engage in work in the central part of the State, a friend said to him: 'I am sorry you are going to those burnt-over districts. You will not

find fruitful revival fields there.' The evangelist, therefore, went with some misgivings. He soon found his mistake, and was led to thank God for 'burnt-over districts.' He found those old men—who were converted thirty years before, under the labors of Finney and Knapp—were like old war horses, used to the sounds of battle. Not easily frightened by new methods, they entered heartily into the work, and gave the evangelist most cordial support."

A few years earlier, in 1856, Dr. D. C. Lansing had said: "I have been familiar with these churches [in Central and Western New York] since 1806. I have seen their birth, their progress, their manhood and maturity, and I deem it no great presumption in me to say that I know their history and character at least as well as any man living. That history is written upon the financial records of our Bible, Tract, Foreign and Home Missionary Societies, upon our academies and colleges and upon all those institutions whose object is the elevation of man or the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom; upon the moral worth, the wealth, the general prosperity of cities, towns and villages in those sections of the State and upon the thousands of intelligent, devoted, active friends of Christ, the fruits of those revivals who continue to this day steadfast in the faith and hope they then embraced."

In 1871 Dr. Aiken, pastor at Utica during Finney's labors, said of that revival: "After surveying the result forty years, I am persuaded that it was the work of God."

In 1876 Dr. Charles P. Bush said of the first Rochester revival: "It is not too much to say that the whole

character of the city was changed by that revival. Most of the leaders of society being converted, and exerting a controlling influence in social life, in business, and in civil affairs, religion was enthroned as it has been in few other places. The city has been famous ever since for its high moral tone, its strong churches, its evangelical and earnest ministry, its frequent and powerful revivals of religion."

Those who were best acquainted with Mr. Finney's work have thus given abundant evidence of its permanence and power. While it is doubtless true that of the multitudes who made a profession of religion under his preaching some went away into apostasy and denied the faith, it is none the less true that the great majority who were converted through his instrumentality were true to their vows and honored the Christian profession throughout the remainder of their lives.

Chapter XI

Personalia

A large number of anecdotes, amusing and otherwise, have been told of President Finney, many of which are apocryphal. The newspaper writers of his day eagerly seized upon any extravagant joke related of him and with keen delight made haste to give it currency. Of well authenticated incidents a few have been selected, the narration of which will afford a better conception of some of his traits and characteristics than could be done by a more formal attempt at the delineation of his character.

He very rarely departed from the rule adopted by the New Lebanon Convention to refrain from praying for anyone in public by name without his consent. One Sunday, however, Professor Morgan, his colleague in the pastorate of the Oberlin Church, was to occupy the pulpit. Professor Morgan was a very profound man, but his profundity was his weakness, for not infrequently he preached over the heads of the people. In the prayer that preceded the sermon Mr. Finney said: "O Lord, we ask that thou wilt give Brother Morgan great simplicity of utterance; may he preach the truth so clearly that we shall not be obliged to stand on tip-

toe to grasp the thoughts which he is about to present."

On another occasion when the great choir, composed of college students, had rendered an elaborate but somewhat unintelligible anthem, he offered this petition, which discloses in a way his practical turn of mind: "O Lord, we trust that thou hast understood the song which they have tried to sing, but thou knowest that *we* did not understand a word of it."

When Lincoln's successor was attempting those measures which brought him into disfavor with the North, Finney once prayed: "And now, Lord, we pray thee for Andrew Johnson. Wilt thou show him that he is only a man, and after all a very poor specimen of a man. But if he persists in misapprehending himself, then wilt thou put him to bed. Put a hook in his nose and keep him from doing this mischief."

Although his prayers had their peculiarities, there was nothing irreverent about them. To those who heard him, it seemed as if he were holding converse with his Maker face to face, and talking to One with whom he was on terms of the most intimate friendship. In his public prayers he seemed to be oblivious of the fact that anyone else was present aside from himself and his Maker whom he was addressing. This accounts for the peculiarities and the personal allusions which sometimes characterized them.

He had a profound conviction as to the efficacy of prayer. As a soul winner, as a preacher of righteousness, and as a theological instructor this was the great secret of his power. The present is not an age much given to prayer. To many, if not most, persons God seems remote and afar off. The supernatural has been ruled

out. If it has any meaning at all, prayer is but a vague and indefinite subjective reaction. That God can actually give men the desires of their hearts is regarded not only as improbable but incredible. That would be an interference with the immutable laws of nature.

In contrast to these rationalistic views, Finney believed that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." He accepted very literally the promise, "What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." We must not infer from this, however, that Finney's view of prayer was naïve and unphilosophical. On the contrary, in his lecture on the Prayer of Faith he expressly limits such prayer to the promises, the prophecies, and the providences of God, or to the direct and immediate promptings of the Spirit of God. In the latter, perhaps, is to be found an explanation for the fervor and urgency of his prayer in the incident which follows.

In the summer of 1853 northern Ohio was suffering from a severe drought, the pastures were dried up, and the prospects for a crop were very slender. Under these circumstances, with a cloudless sky above them, the members of the Oberlin congregation assembled one Sunday for worship. The burden of Finney's prayer was a plea for rain: "Lord, we want rain. We do not presume to dictate unto thee, but our pastures are dry, and the earth is gaping open for rain. The cattle are wandering about and lowing in search of water. Even the little squirrels in the woods are suffering from thirst. Unless thou givest us rain, our cattle will die and our harvests will come to naught. O Lord, send us rain, and

send it now! Although to us there is no sign of it, it is an easy thing for thee to do. *Send it now,* for Christ's sake. Amen."

The service proceeded, but before he was half through with his sermon the rain descended in such torrents that he could scarcely be heard. He paused and said: "Let us praise God for this rain," and gave out the hymn,

> When all thy mercies, O my God,
> My rising soul surveys,
> Transported with the view, I'm lost
> In wonder, love and praise.

The congregation was so affected that many could not sing for weeping.*

While free from conventionalities, his prayers as a rule were most tender and sympathetic. Especially was this true of his petitions at the close of the term, when the students were about to go out into the world to face its struggles and temptations. Their individual needs seemed to come before him as he pled with the Father in their behalf. One of the theological classes was about to graduate and they gathered in the lecture room for one of his last lectures. As usual he opened the hour with prayer. He prayed: "O Lord, here is a class of young men who are going forth to preach the

*Two or three years later another dry season occurred in that section, and at an evening service Professor Morgan prayed for rain. A slight downpour followed. On the way home a new student observed to another that they had had a remarkable evidence of answered prayer. But the other, who had been present on the occasion above described, replied, "You ought to hear President Finney pray for rain. When Professor Morgan prays for rain, it just drizzles, but when President Finney prays, it pours!"

everlasting gospel, and Thou knowest that their words will be like the repetition of parrots, unless Thou shalt fill them with the Holy Ghost." Thus he went on, oblivious of the recitation, with increasing fervor and earnestness, until the bell rang for the next recitation, when the members of the class one by one tiptoed out of the room leaving him still upon his knees before God.

When the National Congregational Council met in Oberlin in 1871 advantage was taken of the occasion to dedicate the new theological building, which from the event was named Council Hall. Although the building was not yet completed Mr. Finney was asked to offer the dedicatory prayer. He prefaced his prayer with these remarks: "I have felt somewhat embarrassed with regard to performing this part of the service, because the house is not entirely finished. I have several times refused to take part in dedicating a house of worship that was not paid for; but this is neither finished nor paid for, and hence I have some hesitation about offering it to God in this state. But I remember that I have often offered myself to God, and I am far from being finished yet, and why should I not offer this house just as it is? I will do so, relying upon the determination of those having it in charge to finish it as soon as possible."

His conversations sometimes were quite as remarkable as his prayers. He had been present at the burning of a grist mill and on his homeward way, after the fire had been extinguished, he met a student to whom he said: "Good evening, we've had quite a fire, haven't we? Are you a Christian?" On another occasion while he was out walking he met a tailor by the name of Godly,

whom he stopped, saying, "I don't think I have ever met you before. What is your name?" Upon being informed, he exclaimed, "Godly! Godly! Well, are you a Christian, Mr. Godly?" "No, sir." "Well, then," replied Mr. Finney with a sorrowful cast of countenance, "it might just as well be Un-Godly."

Abrupt and impertinent as his questions often seemed to be, no mere recital of them can give any adequate impression of the effect that they produced. They never seemed strange or out of place to those of whom they were asked. The tone of his voice, the look in his eye, the serious aspect of his countenance, the evident sincerity of his manner were not soon forgotten by those to whom his words were addressed, and many of the students had occasion afterwards to look back with life-long gratitude to the timely words which came to them from their college president, and which often were the means of bringing them into the Kingdom of Christ.

While he was always tender and sympathetic toward those who were sincere in their quest after higher things, he could brook no flippancy over matters of religion. A student, for the sake of argument, once went to him with the statement, "Mr. Finney, I'm afraid I've committed the unpardonable sin." Looking at him a moment, Finney replied abruptly, "Well, I guess you have." The young man was completely taken aback by the unexpected answer, and being led into a better frame of mind, became a Christian.

Early in his career he was approached by a Presbyterian elder with the question, "What would you think of a man who was praying week after week for the Holy Spirit and could get no answer?" "I should think that he

was praying from wrong motives." "But from what motives should one pray? If he wants to be happy, is that a false motive?" "Satan might pray with as good a motive," was the answer, and then the evangelist quoted the words of the Psalmist: "Uphold me with thy free spirit. Then will I teach transgressors thy ways; and sinners shall be converted unto thee. See!" he went on, "the Psalmist did not pray that he might be happy, but that he might be useful, and that sinners might be converted." The elder at first was very angry, but being left to self-contemplation he soon realized that his whole attitude had been a selfish one and that after all he had never really been converted. He soon made confession to the evangelist and dedicated himself completely to the service of Christ.

In dealing with individuals and congregations his attitude was always practical. In a community which he once visited there had been a serious reaction against an extravagant religious excitement which had swept over it, leaving effects that were disastrous. He said: "I found that it had left some practices that were offensive, and calculated rather to excite ridicule than any serious conviction of the truth of religion. For example I found a custom prevailing like this: every professor of religion felt it a duty to testify for Christ. They must take up the cross and say something in meeting. One would rise and say in substance: 'I have a duty to perform which no one can perform for me. I arise to testify that religion is good; though I must confess that I do not enjoy it at present. I have nothing in particular to say, only to bear my testimony; and I hope that you will pray for me.' This concluded, that person would

sit down and another would rise and say, 'Religion is good; I do not enjoy it; I have nothing else to say, only to bear my testimony; and I hope you will pray for me.' Of course the ungodly would make sport of this; it was in fact ridiculous and repulsive." To counteract the effect of this he substituted preaching services interspersed with prayers. He would talk for a time, and then he would call upon some sensible brother to lead in prayer, after which he would resume his discourse. In this way the evil practice was discontinued.

While he was pastor of Broadway Tabernacle, New York, he was so worn out by his excessive labors that a period of rest became imperative. He went for the purpose to a quiet village in the country. But like his Master, he "could not be hid." Not long after his arrival the pastor of the village church invited him to preach. At first he absolutely refused, but he learned that the pastor received a very small salary, one half of which was paid by the Ladies' Sewing Society, when there were men in the church who could pay the entire amount without feeling it. Speaking later of the incident, he said: "My indignation was stirred, and weak as I was I felt I must preach. I did so, and took for my text, 'Give an account of thy stewardship.' Towards the close of the sermon I applied my remarks to the officers of that church, and told them what I had heard, and I lashed them as with a whip of scorpions. While I was laying on the whip, the Senior Deacon rose up, and with tears streaming down his face, cried out, 'Mr. Finney! Mr. Finney! please don't say any more. I'll pay the whole of it!' "

Not long after he went to Oberlin the question of

creed came up in the First Church. With a deep sense of the wrong which had been done to individuals and the injustice which had been wrought to the cause of religion by certain formulas of belief, he remarked: "I have sometimes thought that I would only have two articles in a creed: First, that the Bible is the only rule of faith; and Second, that every other creed under heaven is an abomination in the sight of God. But," he added, "I have observed that churches without creeds generally have not turned out well."

Charles G. Finney had as keen a sense as Martin Luther of the reality of the prince of this world. When a young convert came with horse and carriage to take him to Stephentown, he asked if the horse was safe. "Because if the Lord wants me to go to Stephentown, the devil will prevent it if he can; and if you have not a steady horse, he will try to make him kill me." To conclude the story he added: "Strange to tell, before we got there, that horse ran away twice, and came near killing me. His owner expressed the greatest astonishment, and said he had never known such a thing before."

Not long before his death a man of professedly liberal views called to see him and after expressing general approval of Finney's teachings said: "But there is one point upon which I do not agree with you; I don't believe in a personal devil." "You don't!" exclaimed Finney, "You don't believe in a personal devil! Well, you resist him awhile, and you will believe in him."

Yet, with his vivid realization of the existence of a prince of evil, Finney always kept his feet on the ground. His daughter tells us that, in his old age, one

night after midnight the family was awakened by the loud ringing of the doorbell. Finney himself answered the summons. At the door stood a tall colored man who said, "Dey hab got de debil ober hyar in de schoolhouse and de Lord wants you to come ober and drive him away; de *Lord* wants you to come." Finney looked at him a moment, and then, as he closed the door, replied: "Not *He,* at this time of night!"

His sermons were always direct and pointed. He often clinched them with personal appeals which brought the truth home to all who heard him. For example, if preaching to the church at Oberlin on the lack of faithful effort, he might turn and say: "How is it with Brother Morgan here? How is it in Brother H——'s neighborhood? Is Brother D—— fully alive to the work?"

On one occasion he preached from the subject, The Signs of a Seared Conscience. During the course of his remarks he said: "Just consider the condition in which I found myself yesterday. I engaged a number of men to make garden and put in my crops, but when I went to look for my farming tools I could not find them. Brother Mahan borrowed my plough some time ago and has forgotten to bring it back. Brother Morgan has borrowed my harrow and I presume has it still. Brother Beecher has my spade and hoe, and so all my tools were scattered. I appeal to you, how can society exist when such a simple duty as that of returning borrowed property does not rest as a burden upon the conscience?"

The effects of this sermon were quite remarkable.

The next morning before daybreak, some of the members of the family were awakened by the barking of a dog. Peering through the shutters into the darkness, they discovered the cause of the commotion. An old Scotchman to whom Finney had loaned a sawhorse was returning the borrowed property. Throughout the day implements came pouring in from all quarters, some of which Finney had never seen or heard of before.

One of the themes upon which he loved to dwell was the story of the Prodigal Son. In describing the anxious longing of the father he would shade his eyes with his hand as if to look for the home coming of his boy. Then he would feel for his glasses, which he did so naturally and so pathetically as to awaken no thought of the anachronism. To illustrate still further the anxiety of the waiting parents he would walk to the edge of the platform and, peering into the distance, would exclaim: "Ma, don't that look like our James?" The pathos of his voice, his manner, and gestures were such as to make the story indescribably touching and impressive.

With all of his abruptness and apparent severity of manner he had the saving sense of humor. On being told that a well known doctor of divinity wanted him to come and conduct a series of revival services he answered, "Yes, he would ride, if I would row the boat."

On being asked by a student why he never preached from the text, "They have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water," he said that the idea of a man's forsaking a living fountain and trying to get

water by working a creaking pump in an empty cistern seemed so ludicrous that he dared not trust himself before an audience with it.

At one time, on account of ill health, he was obliged to meet the theological students in his parlor where one of them, succumbing to the soporific influence of an easy chair, departed to the land of dreams. Finney closed the recitation with a prayer that the members of the class might be sufficiently interested in their study to be kept from sleeping. On their return the following day the students found to their dismay that the easy chairs had been replaced with straight-backed wooden ones from the kitchen. "You see, young gentlemen," said their teacher with a twinkle in his eyes, "I have found a way to answer my own prayers."

The following incident not only displays his keen sense of humor but was indicative of his own punctiliousness of habit. One of the professors at Oberlin was somewhat phlegmatic in temperament, and at his home they were very dilatory about responding to the doorbell. One day President Finney rang the bell, which, contrary to the usual procedure, was attended to by the professor's son with great promptness. The door opened as Finney's tall form disappeared out of the gate, but turning back he called, "Is that you, Charles? I thought I would ring the bell, go down town and be let in when I returned."

Dr. Gray of *The Interior* related the following incident: "The last time I ever met Mr. Finney, something was said at which he laughed heartily, showing a splendid set of teeth. When I remarked upon them he responded: 'I never lost but two in my life, and they

were wisdom teeth, and that some of my theological friends may say accounts for it,' and he laughed again."

Notwithstanding his seeming austerity of manner, he was kindly and sympathetic by nature and generous to a fault. A kind-hearted woman once told him that Mr. Spencer, a missionary to the Ojibway Indians, had no overcoat, and he straightway sent him the best overcoat he had, one costing him in the neighborhood of fifty dollars.

In this narrative we have had little occasion to refer to purely personal matters in the life of the great revivalist. In this connection it should be said that he was thrice married. His first wife was Miss Lydia Andrews of Whitestone, New York, to whom he was married in the autumn of 1824. To them were born several children, four of whom grew to maturity—Charles, for many years an attorney in California; Frederick, a civil engineer who took an active part in railway promotion in Wisconsin; Helen, who after the early death of her first husband, Professor William Cochrane, became the wife of Gen. J. D. Cox, of Ohio; and Julia, wife of Professor James Munroe of Oberlin. Finney's first wife died in 1847. He afterwards married Mrs. Elizabeth F. Atkinson, of Rochester, who assisted him in his revival labors, conducting women's meetings in London, Boston, and elsewhere. She died in 1863. His third wife was Miss Rebecca A. Rayl, who had been assistant principal in the ladies' department at Oberlin. She passed away at Kentland, Indiana, September 12, 1907.

Finney's later years constituted the most tranquil period in his life. During his earlier labors his teachings

had provoked a great deal of controversy and he was bitterly assailed on every hand. While he differed with some of his contemporaries on certain points of doctrine, his grasp upon the great essentials of the Christian faith never could be called into question. As time elapsed and men were enabled to see one another face to face his distinguishing views created less and less opposition, so that at last he came to enjoy the confidence of his brethren to a much greater extent than had been the case at any other period during his eventful career.

He achieved a notable triumph at the meeting of the National Congregational Council, which was organized at Oberlin in November, 1871. He had been asked to address the Council on The Gift of the Holy Spirit. The weight of years was upon him, but his mind kindled to the great theme, which he treated with such sweet reasonableness as to disarm the prejudices of all who sat before him. Tears flowed down the faces of that great audience as he dwelt upon a subject which had been so vital to him throughout his long and useful life. The day following, when the Council witnessed the laying of the corner stone for Council Hall, the new theological building, Dr. Buddington, the moderator, could well say:

"I rejoice to stand this day upon the grave of buried prejudice. It is true that Oberlin has been a battle-cry in our ranks for a generation. It is so no longer, but a name of peace, of inspiration, and hope. What does the history of Oberlin prove but just this,—to hold sacred the individual conscience, and inviolable the liberty of the church? If days of darkness come, of suspicion

and alienation, as sure as God's truth is great and the love of Christ pervasive the light will return and come again with a brighter and sweeter effulgence."

Finney continued his connection with the college to the time of his death, completing his last course of lectures to the theological students in July, 1875. His last days have been characterized by President Fairchild as follows:

"Notwithstanding the abundant and exhausting labors of his long public life, the burden of years seemed to rest lightly upon him. He still stood erect, as a young man, retained his faculties to a remarkable degree, and exhibited to the end the quickness of thought and feeling, and imagination, which always characterized him. His life and character perhaps never seemed richer, than in these closing years and months. His public labors were of course very limited, but the quiet power of his life was felt as a benediction upon the community, which, during these forty years, he had done so much to guide and mold and bless."

Mr. Finney's death took place August 16, 1875. His last day on earth was a peaceful Sabbath, which he had enjoyed in the midst of his family. At sunset he walked out with his wife to listen to the music at the opening of the evening service in the church near by. The worshipers were singing "Jesus, lover of my soul." He took up the words and sang with the invisible congregation to the end. That night upon retiring he was seized with pains at the heart. About two o'clock in the morning he asked for some water. But it could not quench his thirst, and he said, "Perhaps this is the thirst of death." A moment later he added, "I am

dying." These were his last words. When morning dawned he had joined the choir invisible.

In 1908, through the benefaction of his son, the late Frederick Norton Finney of Milwaukee, the Finney Memorial Chapel, a massive structure of stone, with a seating capacity of two thousand, was erected at Oberlin at a cost of one hundred and thirty-five thousand dollars. A marble bust of President Finney by Andreoni of Rome, presented to the College in 1900 by Frederick Norton Finney, occupies a central position in the vestibule. Upon a tablet is the following inscription:

THAT THE YOUTH
OF THIS FOUNDATION OF LEARNING
MAY DAILY MEET TO WORSHIP GOD
AND THAT A SON MAY HONOR
THE MEMORY OF HIS FATHER
THIS CHAPEL IS BUILT
AS A MONUMENT
TO
CHARLES GRANDISON FINNEY
BY
HIS YOUNGEST SON
FREDERICK NORTON FINNEY
IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD
1908

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